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ABSTRACT

The participatory rural appraisal (PRA) technique was used with 1,550 women and 420 men in more than 100 villages in Uganda, El Salvador, and Bangladesh over a 2-year period to develop and pilot test an approach to literacy education called REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques). The REFLECT approach, which is based on the theoretical framework developed by Paulo Freire, draws on PRA techniques to promote active dialogue and empowerment as literacy circle participants develop their own materials and thereby take ownership of the issues that arise as their skills develop. In each country, the changes observed in individuals receiving literacy instruction based on the REFLECT approach were compared to those observed in control groups taught by traditional teaching methods. Of those adults who initially enrolled in REFLECT circles, 65% in El Salvador, 60% in Bangladesh, and 68% in Uganda achieved basic literacy over a 1-year period compared to only 43%, 26%, and 22% of individuals in the control groups in the respective countries. The REFLECT circle participants remained motivated and dropped out in much lower numbers than did their control group counterparts. Contains 59 tables/figures/photographs and 31 references. (MN)

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REPORT ON REFLECT

REGENERATED FREIREAN LITERACY THROUGH EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TECHNIQUES

THE EXPERIENCES OF THREE REFLECT PILOT PROJECTS IN UGANDA, BANGLADESH, EL SALVADOR

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Abstract

1. Background

1.1 In October 1993 ACTIONAID began a two year action research project to explore possible uses of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques within adult literacy programmes. This has led to the development of the REFLECT approach (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques).

1.2 The action research was carried out in over 100 villages spread through three projects in Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh (involving a total of 1,550 women and 420 men). These pilot projects were rigorously documented and evaluated (with control groups) to determine the practical value of using PRA techniques in adult literacy in very diverse circumstances.

1.3 The REFLECT approach seeks to build on the theoretical framework developed by the Brazilian Paulo Freire, but provides a practical methodology by drawing on PRA techniques.

2. The Method

2.1 In a REFLECT programme there is no textbook - no literacy *"primer"* - no pre-printed materials other than a guide for the literacy facilitators. Each literacy circle develops its own learning materials through the construction of maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams that represent local reality, systematise the existing knowledge of learners and promote the detailed analysis of local issues.

2.2 These *"graphics"* might include maps of households, land use, or land tenancy; calendars of gender workloads, illnesses or income; matrices to analyse local crops, credit sources / uses or participation in local organisations. Each graphic is initially constructed on the ground, using whatever materials are locally available (sticks, stones, beans etc). Simple visual cards (locally designed) help with the transfer of the graphics from the ground to large pieces of paper (the first step to literacy). Words can then be introduced in places where their spatial location helps to reinforce recognition. As the literacy course progresses so the range of graphics produce a wider range of vocabulary (from the linguistic universe of the learners) and learner-generated writing is promoted.

2.3 By the end of the literacy course, each circle will have produced between 20 or 30 maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams; and each participant will have a copy of these in their books, together with phrases they have written. The participants are able to produce a real document rather than being left with an exercise book full of copied scribbles. The graphics become a permanent record for communities, giving them a basis on which to plan their own development. Meanwhile, the organisation which has promoted the literacy programme can also end up with a detailed survey of the conditions, needs and attitudes of people in every village (which might take years to produce using other methods).

2.4 The method aims to promote active dialogue (which was at the basis of Freire's method but which very rarely happens with primer-based approaches) and empowerment. As participants construct their own materials they take ownership of the issues that come up and are more likely to be moved to take local action, change their behaviour or their attitudes.

3. The Pilots

3.1 In Bundibugyo, Uganda the pilot was in a multi-lingual area where neither of the two main local languages was previously written. In Bangladesh the pilot was with women's savings and credit groups in a conservative Islamic area and in El Salvador the pilot was with a grassroots NGO, *"Comunidades Unidas de Usulutan"* (supported by the national NGO, CIAZO) which is led by ex guerrillas converting to peaceful methods after 10 years in arms.

3.2 The three pilot programmes were evaluated (compared to control groups using traditional methods in each country) in the first six months of 1995. The evaluations included basic literacy and numeracy tests and assessments of the wider impact of the literacy process on community development and empowerment.

4. Conclusions

4.1 In the three pilot programmes the REFLECT approach proved to be both more effective at teaching people to read and write and more effective at linking literacy to wider development.

4.2 Of those adults who initially enrolled in REFLECT circles 65% in El Salvador, 60% in Bangladesh and 68% in Uganda, achieved basic

literacy over a one year period. This compared to 43%, 26% and 22% in the respective control groups [and a typical 25% according to Abadzi (1994)]. REFLECT was particularly effective with women (and in Bangladesh specifically with younger women in the 15-19 age group). Participants in REFLECT circles remained well motivated and dropped out in much lower numbers than those in the control groups. There were positive signs that the participants are developing literate habits but it is too early to evaluate fully the extent to which literacy skills have been permanently consolidated.

4.3 In respect of empowerment the three evaluations identified the following major outcomes:

- Participants in all three pilots spoke of self realisation as one of the major benefits of the REFLECT circles. Most spoke of better self esteem and the increased ability to analyse and solve problems as well as articulate ideas. Furthering their knowledge of the local environment (agriculture, health, income generation and survival skills) helped this process of self realisation, which was also reflected by improved relations within the community (and within the household).

- Increased participation in community organisations was a concrete outcome of the REFLECT circles in Uganda and El Salvador. Most strikingly, 61% of learners in El Salvador reported that they had now assumed formal positions of responsibility in community organisations which they did not hold before the REFLECT literacy programme (eg chair, secretary or treasurer on the Community Council, Cooperative Directorate, Credit Committee, PTA, health committee, women's group or church group).

- The discussions in the literacy classes often led to community level actions to improve local conditions. These actions ranged from the economic sphere (constructing grain-stores, diversifying crops, cooperative buying or selling) to community projects (small infrastructure such as re-grading access roads, school repairs, water pipes); from the environmental sphere (terracing, organic fertilisers, tree nurseries, tree planting) to the health sphere (digging a tubewell, building latrines, clearing rubbish, cleaning stagnant water). The key factor in achieving the implementation of these actions was felt to be that the learners had independently arrived at decisions to do something through their own analysis - they felt a local ownership of the problems and of the possible solutions.

- The evaluations also revealed that the REFLECT circles had a positive influence on people's resource management at an individual or household level. Women in Bangladesh repeatedly spoke of the value of calendars and matrices to strengthen their analytical skills, enabling them to plan better, develop more effective coping strategies (eg bulk buying and storing goods) and have more control over decisions regarding loan use (which was previously dominated by men). In Uganda there were what appeared to be the beginnings of significant attitudinal changes seen in relation to child spacing, polygamy and traditional cultural practices which can undermine food security.

- The REFLECT pilots appeared to have had a positive initial impact on gender roles and relations in Uganda and Bangladesh. In Uganda learners and facilitators reported that many men have taken on domestic work, such as carrying water and fetching fuel wood, previously carried out by women. Women are now more vocal and more involved in key household and community decisions. In Bangladesh women attributed their growing involvement in household decision making to the REFLECT circle. However, in El Salvador, where the organisations and individuals involved in the pilot lacked basic gender awareness, there was no significant impact on gender roles, revealing that much depends on how the methodology is interpreted and applied.

- The evaluations revealed that the REFLECT circles had a positive impact on health awareness, typified by the comment of one woman from Bangladesh: *"We learnt something of health before but it was not very practical and felt like a lot of rules. With making maps it was a lot more helpful and we understand things a lot better."* This was translated into concrete actions in many communities, particularly involving latrine building and more effective disposal of waste.

- In respect of children's education the most dramatic results were seen in Uganda. Government schools fed by REFLECT parents have experienced a 22% increase in enrolment; and parents in over one-third of the REFLECT classes have started their own NFE centre for primary age children. A more modest increase in school attendance was registered in the other pilots.

4.4 The REFLECT approach proved to be low cost and cost effective in Bangladesh (£12 per learner) and Uganda (£11 per learner), in both cases

cheaper than an equivalent primer-based programme. In El Salvador, the only pilot programme to use volunteer teachers, the costs were surprisingly higher (£34 per learner) owing to the small scale of the programme in a country where costs are high. In a REFLECT programme resources are shifted from printing to training, which makes the REFLECT approach generally cheaper than a primer-based approach at a time of high printing costs.

4.5 A process of methodological learning has taken place through the pilot programmes so that the REFLECT approach is now stronger. Certain core recommendations are made. For example: facilitators should normally have at least 6th grade primary education in order to teach other adults; visual cards should be made much more simple than in the pilots; a broad range of approaches to reading and writing integrated with the graphics should be stressed (avoiding the use of key words throughout) and training for facilitators should be ongoing. Most of these observations are relevant to making any adult literacy programme effective. The essence of the REFLECT method as it has emerged through the pilot experiences has been compiled into a REFLECT Mother Manual available from ACTIONAID.

4.6 Literacy does not empower people. The control groups showed very few signs of having changed peoples lives. It seems that many of the past claims about the benefits of literacy are bogus. Literacy in itself probably does not empower and does not bring benefits in respect of health, productivity, community organisation, population growth etc.

However, this is not to say that literacy can never bring such benefits. This research has shown that the REFLECT methodology has brought quite dramatic benefits in the three pilot projects. This appears to be because the REFLECT approach involves two parallel and interweaving processes: a literacy process and an empowering process. The literacy gives people practical skills which will help in the empowerment process (eg as they assume positions of responsibility in community organisations) and the empowerment process in turn creates uses for literacy in people's everyday lives. This mutual consolidation and reinforcement is the essence of why it makes sense to fuse the two processes. To successfully interweave the two processes requires a well structured participatory methodology.

Literacy programmes in the past (especially since Freire) have tried to fuse the two processes and some have succeeded, with remarkable results. However, most have failed because they have fallen into believing that either literacy in itself is sufficient (so they have ignored other processes and focused on the product) or they have assumed that empowerment in itself is enough (but have in practice tried to "indoctrinate" people into new ideologies). REFLECT holds these two processes in an effective balance and helps them to build on each other.

4.7 There are many unanswered questions that remain. How flexible will the REFLECT approach prove to be? Will it work in urban areas, with refugees, with adolescents, within a government programme? Will it work on a large scale or will the participatory essence be lost? Will people who have learnt in the original pilots retain their skills in the longer term? Three things are needed:

- ongoing evaluation of the original pilot programmes and of new REFLECT experiences (for a minimum of three years).

- a capacity to train others and promote best practice so that methodological learning is continuous.

- the continual experimentation and scaling up of the approach in different contexts.

ACTIONAID is planning to address all three of these in the coming three years.

Foreword

In October 1993, ACTIONAID started a two year action research project aimed at developing a new approach to adult literacy. The project arose from a review of past experiences of adult literacy programmes which (despite the rhetoric of literacy planners), on the whole, have both failed to teach people to read and write and failed to link literacy to wider development. The new method was to draw on the visualisation techniques developed by practitioners of Participatory Rural Appraisal - who have firmly established that non-literate communities can construct elaborate local maps, calendars and matrices.

The broad principles of the new method were outlined in a short paper distributed to offices in the 20 countries around the world where ACTIONAID is working with poor communities. Seven countries responded positively and asked to participate in the pilot experience. However, owing to limited capacity and the need for detailed support and evaluation, only three countries were selected. They were selected, in part, for the diversity of contexts that they offered - so that the method could be tested in different conditions. The three projects were in Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh.

All three pilot projects were established in programmes supported by ACTIONAID. These are all long term integrated rural development programmes in defined geographical areas. This *"Development Area"* approach gives ACTIONAID a strong foundation for action research as the agency is able to take detailed baseline information and monitor and evaluate its work rigorously over a period of up to 20 years.

Initially this new *"literacy method"* was simply an idea. There was no detailed *"package"* and indeed some very fundamental questions were yet to be answered. It was only through direct work in the field, firstly in Bundibugyo, Uganda (in August 1993) that the method really began to take shape. Working over four weeks with the local ACTIONAID team (many of whom were experienced in community development but not in literacy), the method took shape and the first facilitators' manual emerged. The focus on (previously unwritten) local languages led to exciting innovations with a single manual being adapted for use in three different languages giving learners in each class a real choice over language. Another major step was taken with the introduction of visual cards (a creative solution to an enduring obstacle that we encountered in the first days).

In November 1993, in El Salvador the basic method from Uganda was adapted to the highly politicised post-civil war context for a literacy programme run by ex-guerrillas. This required radically different types of maps and matrices (eg of land tenancy and displacement) and involved working with a team that had no previous experience of using Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques.

In March 1994 the accumulated experience of Uganda and El Salvador was taken to Bangladesh - to start up a literacy programme in a conservative Islamic area, for women who were formed into savings and credit groups. The local team wanted a strong focus on numeracy - as the central goal was to make the savings and credit groups self-managing. This involved trying to extend the new approach to the area of numeracy and redefining the type of map or matrix to be constructed. Working with women who had very little opportunity to leave their homestead and who were not centrally involved in all agricultural activities, the range of themes covered was changed.

At the time of setting up each of the three pilot literacy projects, the local teams also identified *"control groups"* - other literacy programmes in the area working in similar conditions over a similar timeframe - but using a traditional primer-based approach. Contact was to be maintained with these control groups throughout the period so as to offer a contextual basis for the results of the new approach.

It was only in November 1994, in an international workshop in Bangladesh, that the new approach received a name. Prior to this workshop the project had simply been known as the *"PRA and Literacy Project"* - but this caused some confusion when trying to explain the approach. It often involved explaining what PRA is and getting caught up in the word *"appraisal"* - before then saying that we were using PRA in a very new way. For this reason it was felt that the approach needed naming and following consultation the name *"REFLECT"* was accepted. The acronym REFLECT is a convenient short-hand and is how most people involved now know the approach. It stands in full for: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. Paulo Freire (the pioneering Brazilian educator) was briefed about the new approach as early as October 1993 and has been kept in close contact with its development. In March 1995 he wrote to offer his support, commenting:

"please feel free to use my name in the title of the new approach to adult literacy."

The three pilot projects were evaluated in the early months of 1995, drawing on external support as much as possible. These were evaluations in two quite different respects:

- they were evaluations of the method in itself - documenting the REFLECT approach as it emerged from the field experience; and

- they were evaluations of the relative success of the method in teaching people to read and write - and in empowering them in their daily lives.

The results of the evaluation of the method itself are consolidated into a separate practical publication, *"The Mother Manual"* which brings together the best practice of REFLECT to date, tries to identify strengths and weaknesses, and aims to enable the reader to replicate the approach in new settings. This is already happening in more than twenty countries and there is an active interest being shown in many others.

There are of course many key questions which still have to be answered as REFLECT is taken up in different countries and contexts. It has not yet been possible to determine the longer term sustainability of the approach. Working with REFLECT on a larger scale will bring up many new issues and adapting the approach for urban areas will bring up others. There is still much unknown territory and a need for close monitoring and ongoing research in order to learn more. There is also a need for strong coordination between REFLECT experiences in different settings to ensure this learning is taken on board and to prevent fundamental distortions of the approach.

Given the above, this research report is, in many ways, still an interim report. REFLECT is still evolving and a two year time frame is insufficient to draw firm conclusions. Nevertheless, the indications from the three pilot programmes are extremely encouraging.

The results of the three REFLECT evaluations are presented here in detail - in chapter four - which forms the heart of the report. However, this report also seeks to put the work in context. The Introduction provides an overview of present literacy debates. This leads into the chapter on the theoretical background to REFLECT. The REFLECT methodology is then summarised in chapter three (see the REFLECT Mother Manual for more detail). In Chapter four there is a detailed, cross-country analysis of the three case studies. Following some concluding reflections in Chapter Five the report ends with an open dialogue, responding to a series of challenging questions which have either been put to us in the past or might be put in the future.

1. Introduction

Claims & Counter-claims

From the past literature on adult literacy one would be excused for thinking that literacy is a *"wonder-drug"*. With a simple dose of literacy adults develop logical abilities, become politically aware, organise to solve their problems and increase their productivity. As a result of this miracle cure, women are empowered, the rate of population growth is reduced, immunisation coverage is increased, infant mortality declines, community organisations are strengthened, countries become modernised and governments become more accountable and democratic.

In recent years these claims have been increasingly challenged and many myths have been exploded. Rogers (1993) stresses *"In truth we do not know the effects of adult literacy programmes on the quality of life or the power nexus of the poor."* Wagner (1995) emphasises that there is insufficient evidence to show that adult literacy leads to modernisation or changed attitudes, to democracy or to increased productivity. There is a *"lack of solid evidence undergirding the claims"*. Particularly there is a lack of research that separates out literacy acquired by children through formal schools and literacy acquired through adult education. The conclusion Wagner comes to is that *"literacy work contains no magic answer for any society"*.

As the myths surrounding adult literacy have been challenged the very notion of what *"literacy"* is has also come into question. Street (1993) argues that *"to understand literacy requires detailed in depth accounts of actual practice in different cultural settings"* and he urges an *"ideological approach"* because *"literacy practices are aspects not only of culture but also of power structures"*. This is a big shift from the traditional cognitive or *"autonomous"* approach which either explicitly or implicitly regards non-literate people as *"backward"*, *"primitive"*, or *"the other"* - with literacy being seen a fixed set of techniques which will improve their mental abilities and transform their lives.

In the ideological approach we need to speak about *"literacies"* rather than *"literacy"* - because different literacies serve different independent purposes (see Scribner and Cole 1981). Literacy is defined by each society not by some universally standard independent mark. Rather than just talk about how literacy affects people, the focus should equally be on how people affect literacy: *"individuals in a newly literate society, far from being passively transformed by literacy, instead actively and creatively apply literacy skills to suit their own purposes and needs."* (Kulick and Stroud in Street 1993).

Whereas before people spoke of a great divide between orality and literacy, now these are more often regarded as being on a continuum. This is consistent with the challenging of past myths: there is no magical transition or transformation that takes place with the acquisition of reading and writing. There is nothing inherent in literacy which changes people's way of thinking or their outlook on the world. Moreover, literacy in itself will not change social structures or promote economic or political development.

These debates, whilst sometimes becoming abstract and academic are of crucial importance. If literacy is not a magical cure to the *"disease"* of illiteracy; indeed if illiteracy is not to be regarded as a disease at all, *"India's sin and shame"* as Gandhi called it, then why bother?

Policy makers & donors

Like the academics, policy makers and donors have undergone a shift in their attitudes to adult literacy. In the 1960s, 1970s and even into the 1980s adult literacy programmes were popular - playing a key role in many national development plans. In 1990 at the conference to celebrate the UN's International Literacy Year in Jomtien, the governments of the world committed themselves to *"basic education for all"*. This appeared to reinforce literacy in general. But since then, despite an increase in investment in primary education for children by both governments and international donors there has been relatively little parallel investment in adult education.

The World Bank (1995) continues to argue forcibly for *"good rates of return"* to investment in primary education of children but has not yet undertaken similar work with adult literacy. The European Union has committed itself to support basic education overseas but pays only lip service to adult literacy. Bilateral donors have in some cases, after many years of support to adult education, started withdrawing (eg NORAD in Tanzania).

These trends are worrying, not least because of the important role that adult literacy can play in reinforcing children's education. It is parents who decide whether to send children to school (and it is

parents who increasingly have to pay for that education). A literate and supportive home environment can be fundamental to consolidating and extending a child's progress in learning. Moreover it is the organisation of parents into PTAs or village education committees that can be one of the best means to improve quality in primary schools.

Why then are donors not investing substantially in adult literacy programmes alongside primary education (to fulfil what they committed themselves to at Jomtien)? Maybe it is, in part, the fact that some of the past myths surrounding adult literacy have been shattered. Maybe it is, in part, a lack of resources and a consequent need to prioritise. Maybe it is related to the difficulty *"for donors to justify adult literacy in the kind of hard numbers terms that appeal to their economists"* (Iredale 1995). However, a recent World Bank Discussion Paper (Abadzi 1994) perhaps provides the most important reason: most adult literacy programmes have failed. Reviewing adult literacy programmes worldwide over the past thirty years, Abadzi estimates that for every 100 learners who joined classes, on average only 12 of them actually learnt to read and write. Moreover, adult literacy programmes have, in general, failed to link literacy to wider development. There are of course exceptions (particularly with small scale programmes) but this is the norm. Even where remarkable successes have been declared they have rarely been sustained (eg Nicaragua, see Archer and Costello 1990). This has led to widespread disillusion and has made many governments and donors reluctant to invest in adult literacy.

Yet this is surely a mistake. It is not adult literacy itself that has failed - but adult literacy programmes.

We should respond to this by examining, in more detail, what is happening within adult literacy programmes. Even a simple review will reveal that, worldwide, almost all adult literacy programmes have one thing in common - the same basic method. That method is based on the use of a *"primer"*. In order to resolve some of the problems associated with past literacy programmes should we not re-examine this basic methodology and look for alternatives?

Re-framing the questions

Many problems appear to have arisen from the way in which literacy debates have been framed. We have been asked in the past to look for the benefits of "literacy-in-itself" (the raw skills / techniques) and this has not usually been related to the process of acquiring literacy or to the socio-economic context of particular programmes.

In developing REFLECT we accept that literacy is not in-itself *"empowering"*. It is not, in-itself, something that will bring spontaneous benefits. It does not in-itself transform people and their ways of being.

However, the process of learning literacy is a significant moment in an adult's life. Joining a literacy class represents, in one way or another, a desire for something to change. The experience of learning - what happens within the process - is thus of fundamental importance in determining what happens to that desire. The imparting of literacy techniques will not significantly transform lives, but the wider processes involved and the collective experience of learning may do so.

This is dependent on the literacy methodology used. If people are lectured at, made passive or treated like children, the benefits may be minimal. But if the literacy class becomes a forum in which people can actively participate as equals and engage with some critical issues of their community, then some of the benefits of literacy might pass from the realms of myth to reality.

In this evaluation of the first two years of the REFLECT approach we have sought to explore the extent to which adult literacy programmes can act as a central catalyst for development. We have looked at the past claims and we have tried to determine whether, by using a more effective methodology, we can reassert some links to wider development. The central hypothesis was that there is a relationship between the power practices within the literacy process and the empowering outcomes flowing from that process.

2. Theoretical roots of the new method: REFLECT

2.1 Introduction: Challenging the Global Domination of the Primer

The one almost universal feature of adult literacy programmes world-wide is a *"primer"* in one shape or another (and most primers have very similar shapes and forms). Even radical literacy programmes often depend on a primer. If most literacy programmes have failed then perhaps abolishing the primer may be one of the keys to success.

Adult literacy primers are like basic textbooks. Most of them have 20 or 30 lessons and each lesson starts with a picture which is supposedly based on the local reality of the learners - addressing social and economic issues. The learners are supposed to discuss these pictures and then a key word (or phrase) is given to them that relates to the picture. That word is then often broken down into syllables and the learners practice writing them and make new words. There are some variations but this is the standard model.

Most people who design these primers claim they are using the so called *"psycho social"* method of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. They call their pictures *"codifications"* and the key words *"generative words"*. They claim that there is discussion or dialogue in their literacy classes based on these pictures and that the learners go through a process of *"conscientization"* or awareness raising.

2.2 Introduction to Freire

The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire radicalised a whole generation of literacy workers in the 1960s and 1970s, linking literacy to social change. Freire criticised existing literacy teaching which was based on primers:

"There is an implicit concept of man in the primer's method and content, whether it is recognised by the authors or not... It is the teacher who chooses the words and proposes them to the learners ... the students are to be "filled" with the words the teachers have chosen. It is the profile of a man whose consciousness ... must be filled or fed in order to know".
(Freire 1985)

Freire condemned this *"banking"* concept of education:

"As understood in this concept, man is a passive being, the object of the process of learning to read and write, and not its subject". (Freire 1972)

Freire recognised that the people who were normally the passive objects of literacy classes should be seen differently:

"Agronomists, agriculturalists, public health officials, cooperative administrators, literacy educators - we all have a lot to learn from peasants, and if we refuse to do so, we can't teach them anything." (Freire 1985)

However, for Freire most non-literate people were unable to assert themselves. As a result of oppression they were immersed in a *"culture of silence"*:

"In the culture of silence, to exist is only to live. The body carries out orders from above. Thinking is difficult. Speaking is forbidden." (Freire 1972)

In this context there could be no such thing as neutral education:

"Illiteracy is one of the concrete expressions of an unjust social reality. It is political... it is a process of search and creation... [which must] develop students consciousness of their rights".
(Freire 1985)

Through what Freire called *"the pedagogy of the oppressed"* the students would *"perceive the reality of oppression, not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform".* (Freire 1972)

Freire called this *"conscientization"*: the process of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and taking action against the oppressive elements of reality.

But how could adult literacy work be linked to conscientization? Freire recognised that learners needed to *"gain a distance from"* their everyday lives so that they could see their situation in a new way. The means for doing this was called a *"codification"*.

"Codifications" are pictures or photographs produced after extensive research in a local area, which in their images capture essential problems or contradictions in the lives of the learners. The learners reflect upon these images, first of all describing them and then through *"problematising"*, analyse their deep structure, until they come face to face with their own lives. The codification is thus an *"instrument for this abstraction"* - being able to see reality clearer by taking one step away from it. The process of analysing a codification is called *"decodification"* and involves *"dialogue"*.

Freire saw dialogue as fundamental. He construed this as a coming together of the teacher and learners/students:

"We are advocating a synthesis between the educator's maximally systematised knowing and the learner's minimally systematised knowing - a synthesis achieved in dialogue." (Freire 1985)

"Dialogue" is sometimes mystified by Freire. Effectively it is a discussion, but not just any discussion: rather it is a discussion where people reach below everyday life, open up, and come face to face with new understanding and awareness.

But why link literacy to all of this? Freire was adamant about the need to learn to read and write the world at the same time as learning to read and write the word:

"Learners must see the need for writing one's life and reading one's reality." (Freire 1985)

Freire believed that literacy alone is of no use if there is no other process of change which can help to lift the culture of silence.

Having engaged in dialogue over a codification the next step for the literacy class is the introduction of the word. Not just any word is chosen, but a carefully selected *"generative word"* which is arrived at after *"investigating the vocabulary universe"* (or *"minimal linguistic universe"*) of the learners.The word itself is the focus of further dialogue.

Once a generative word has been introduced, Freire advocated breaking the generative word into component syllables and syllabic families - but always asking questions of the learners, not doing it for them (only *"having prepared the learners critically for the information"* so it *"is not a mere gift"*). Having done this the educator should ask the learners something like: *"do you think we can create something with these pieces?"* For Freire (1985), *"this is the decisive moment for learning"* as the learners *"discover the words of their language by putting them together in a variety of combinations"*. This ends the mystique of written language.

For Freire, the process outlined above would lead to conscientization, giving students a sense of purpose so that they would really be able to "know" the world:

"The act of knowing involves a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action." (Freire 1972)

This was the struggle which could result in political change. The process is called *"praxis"* and Freire stressed that:

"Action of men without objectives is not praxis - it is action ignorant of its own process and of its aim" (Freire 1972)

In summary for Freire:

"If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorising and repeating given syllables, words and phrases but rather, reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself and on the profound significance of language." (Freire 1985)

2.3 Limitations and Distortions of Freire

Elements of Freirean rhetoric are now everywhere - even in literacy programmes which have no commitment to promoting social change. In many respects the Freirean approach has ironically become the traditional approach. Although there have been many new ideas and methodologies developed since Freire, it is Freire who is still most widely quoted and referred to. But in most cases this can best be described as *"pseudo Freireanism"*, stripped of its radical potential. Why?

Although Freire criticised primers in fact most people who profess to use his methods use primers. To a certain extent this was his own fault - having criticised past primers he ended up re-inventing them. The new primers were no longer repeating bland phrases such as *"Mary likes animals"* or *"Eva saw the grape"* but they were still

primers. They were no longer developed by authors in isolation but rather were produced following local socio-economic and linguistic research. Nevertheless the re-invented primers were very prescriptive:

"The first generative word should be trisyllabic .... Having chosen seventeen generative words the next step is to codify seventeen existential situations" (Freire 1985).

Those who now claim to use Freirean methods have simply replaced *"mechanical primers"* with more socially-based words, phrases and pictures - whilst retaining the same essential structure and vehicle - the primer. Although supposedly based on local research, increasingly literacy planners have argued that a detailed survey in one rural community reveals a reality typical of the region or even country - so large-scale, centrally printed primers are said to be justified (ignoring the fact that Freire himself observed about generative words that *"variation in meaning can occur even within the same city"*).

The product is the same *"mechanical practice of literacy"* which Freire himself condemned - but this time done in his name. In practice, despite the declarations and rhetoric of literacy planners, in 95% of cases there is no dialogue in literacy classes. Time and time again, when it comes to the classroom situation, literacy teachers sidestep dialogue (or any effective discussion) and fall back on what they see as the *"meat"* of teaching literacy.

The cases where this is not true tend to be highly politicised literacy programmes with a tendency to impose a new consciousness on learners rather than generating a truly critical consciousness. There are two main reasons for this:

- in the (new) primers the *"codification"* is usually just a picture and the *"generative word"* is just a word. Sometimes almost magical powers are attributed to them but the magic rarely works.

- the literacy teachers using primers around the world are not the highly skilled *"educators"* (or members of the enlightened intelligentsia), imagined (or sometimes implied) by Freire but are local people who have often only completed primary (sometimes secondary) education themselves, working as volunteers (or with low pay) and receiving very little training.

It is difficult to develop a dialogue. To expect largely untrained teachers to do so with just a picture and a word to structure the process is unrealistic. Teachers might have a list of questions in a guidebook (eg what do you see in the picture? what does it mean?) but the learners normally shift around awkwardly, look embarrassed, remain silent or give stock responses to the questions (trying to keep the teacher happy or give the *"right"* answer) . Even if the codifications have been skillfully developed locally and the questions are poignant, developing a dialogue is still not easy. The primer appears in the class from *"outside"* and feels "external" to the lives of the learners.

The result of this lack of dialogue is that literacy becomes a technical process of teaching syllables (often with rote chanting) and other mechanical aspects of reading and writing. Lacking a viable alternative, teachers re-enact their own experiences of education in primary school and treat the adult learners like children. There is no link to local issues, local development or social change. Learners get bored. Many drop out and others struggle on but fail to learn because reading and writing is not meaningfully related to their lives.

There are exceptions to this bleak scenario: occasions when a literacy programme appears in the right time at the right place with the right people. But even here there can be problems. In some places literacy programmes have raised considerable awareness of injustice and oppression but have failed to channel that awareness into effective change. Learners have ended up either disillusioned (when the government and the international capitalist system fail to collapse) or repressed (as they mobilise without a sufficient focus on achievable change built from below).

Many people have criticised Freire. For example, Street questions how well the Freirean approach *"really takes account of local meanings and of cultural and ethnic variations within a nation state and how far teachers can and do give up their position and adopt an equal facilitating role with students"*. Reading Freire one fluctuates between a feeling that non-literate people are being respected and regarded as knowledgeable, and a feeling that they are being portrayed as powerless and ignorant, submerged in a "culture of silence" and suffering from a "fatalistic consciousness". Feminists have also condemned Freire for his persistent references to *"Man"* when he is referring to *"people"* or *"humanity"* (and although this is more a matter of linguistic convention than sexism, Freire

certainly fails to address gender issues in his earlier work).

Despite these shortcomings the philosophy of Freire has a lot to offer. The most serious problems lie with Freire's failure to formulate an effective literacy methodology.

2.4 Introduction to Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal has roots in a reaction to the Western model or the *"modernisation"* approach to development. It is an approach to use against those who believe that there are simple or pre-packaged technological solutions to development which can be imposed by external professionals. PRA practitioners have a desire to start from the lives of communities themselves. But what tools are there to find out about the priorities of the poor themselves? Questionnaires are clumsy, structured from outside, and take a long time to process (often collecting a lot of irrelevant information). Participant observation from the school of anthropology is often too long and drawn out - and is still extractive - often being used for academic papers rather than feeding into action.

PRA practitioners start from the recognition that poor communities have a wealth of technical and social indigenous knowledge. They have survived often through centuries in difficult environments with limited resources. What we need are techniques to enable non-literates to articulate their knowledge - as building on this knowledge and the reality of the poor must be the starting point of any effective development programme.

PRA practitioners have developed a wide range of techniques based on the idea that visualisation can help participation. The starting point is thus the collective construction of maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams on the ground using whatever materials are locally available.

However, as a set of techniques, PRA is not enough. If those who practice it do not have a real respect for, and a real commitment to, the priorities of the poor then it is often still extractive. Some PRA facilitators make copies of the maps constructed by the community and simply take them away for their own planning purposes. In such circumstances there is often a big gulf between what the community articulates and what the external agency subsequently designs. Some agencies nominally use these methods to say they have consulted with communities - but then proceed with their own priorities. Moreover, PRA is often, or even usually, done only on a short-term basis, for example over just two or three weeks - and is usually done only in selected communities.

PRA techniques have been applied to broad appraisals, to detailed diagnoses of health needs or local agriculture but they have not been applied in the past in literacy programmes. The three pilot projects outlined in this report are the first attempts to use PRA techniques systematically for adult literacy.

This may seem surprising because the link between PRA and education would appear to be strong. As Barton (1994) says, "Learning is the active construction of knowledge." PRA has developed a range of techniques which facilitate this construction. Why not place these techniques within an extended learning process? Perhaps the links have not been made because we have come to see education as something different. Barton (1994) observes that with the coming of the printing press, *"The pursuit of truth ... became the discovery of new knowledge rather than the constant effort to recover and preserve traditional knowledge"*. If education encompasses the latter (as well as the former), then PRA can play a useful role. Fuglesang (1982) is helpful on this point:

"Western educationalists have been blind to the oldest and truest pedagogical rule: start with what the students know, not with what you know."

2.5 Tensions Between Freire and Chambers

Chambers (1983, 1993) is the key figure behind PRA, having written and trained extensively. He has often spoken of the origins of PRA and refers to Paulo Freire's work on dialogue and conscientization as one of the central influences: *"Participatory Rural Appraisal belongs to, draws on, and overlaps with other members of a family of approaches that have been or are participatory in various ways. These include the community development of the 1950s and 1960s, the dialogics and conscientization of Paulo Freire, participatory action research, and the work of activist NGOs."* (Chambers 1991)

Brown (1994) however, argues that there are some serious contradictions between the work of

Chambers and Freire. For Chambers *"culture"* is *"a positive social force exemplifying valid beliefs and attitudes already possessed by the peasantry, though blocked by external political controls"*. Chambers believes in *"the capacity of the underclasses to initiate valid social actions on the basis of their existing knowledge and beliefs"*.

To Freire, in contrast, *"culture"* is *"fundamentally problematic"*. Underlying Freire's writing are many references to cognitive barriers (in his descriptions of naive / magical consciousness). Although he blames these on external forces of oppression (rather than blaming people themselves) and regularly refers to the importance of *"love"* for the people, Freire appears not to trust their existing knowledge and beliefs - seeing them as needing to be transcended. Freire implicitly elevates *"rational knowledge"* and implies a hierarchy of knowledge systems. This (according to Brown 1994) can *"only reinforce whatever ideological biases exist within both the extension agency and the wider society, cutting the intervention off from any capacity to draw upon the positive elements in the claimed dual consciousness of the oppressed."*

It is not then just a question of *"regenerating Freire"* as there may be flaws in his theoretical analysis. REFLECT is rooted in a faith in people's existing knowledge and beliefs as a starting point - and this comes more from Chambers than from Freire.

2.6 New Concepts of Literacy: The Ideological Approach

In the introduction we have referred to some of the present debates about literacy. Literacy is no longer seen as a simple skill or competency but as a process. It is more than just the technology in which it is manifest. Street argues that it is a social process in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes. This is the *"ideological view"* of literacy. Literacy cannot be so clearly seen as *"an externally introduced force for change"*. Instead the individual must be *"an active actor in literacy learning - not just a passive recipient of an externally defined and introduced technique"* (Caxton Report 1994).

This ideological approach has certain implications for literacy methodologies. The primer as a pre-fixed *"external"* text would appear to limit literacy practices and be consistent with the traditional or autonomous approach, seeing the need for a fixed body of knowledge to be transferred. To be consistent with the ideological approach a methodology would have to, for example:

- emphasise writing rather than passive reading of fixed texts;
- emphasise creative and active involvement of participants;
- build on existing knowledge of participants, respecting oral traditions and other "literacies";
- focus on learner generated materials (not pre-packaged texts)
- ensure that the process is responsive and relevant to the local context.

Over the last two years of experimentation, REFLECT has attempted to build on these elements in order to develop a methodology which is consistent with the ideological approach.

2.7 Visual Literacy

Much work has been done by Fuglesang (1982), UNICEF Nepal and others (see Murray Bradley 1994) - exploring people's abilities to read and interpret pictures. In development work we take a lot for granted. We assume that people can understand the posters and leaflets we produce if we use lots of pictures instead of words. The images we use seem obvious to us. However they are often not clear to people with little exposure to seeing two dimensional visual images and who are unfamiliar with their conventions. Photos are often too cluttered. Line drawings and cartoons are full of conventions (bubbles / arrows etc) - even perspective (which did not appear in the West until Renaissance art).

As a result of these analyses some work has been done on how to deliver development communications most effectively - how to make pictures easily recognisable or *"readable"* to people with little exposure to two-dimensional visual images. However, no concerted attempt has been made to develop a programme which will in the process help to make people visually literate.

The link between visual and alphabetic literacy is much more eloquently argued by Fuglesang (1982) in the following quotes:

"At the basis of all writing stands the picture".

"What medium may enable the community to evaluate its own reality in a way that will

precipitate new judgments or formulations about it? What medium will trigger in the community a dialogue about its reality that will possibly lead to decisions *and actions to alter that reality? In my experience the issue of literacy and social transformation must start with the picture - the imitative reproduction of reality".*

"[The picture] is the link between the oral and the written lifestyle and the first step on the way to written abstraction. The picture is the bridge from a basically imitative to a digital mode of communication" ... "When you live in reality sometimes you are not able to see it. The picture lifts the mind out of reality. The picture makes the event into an object. The next step is to link the first written concept, the word, to the picture. The picture is the visual environment of the word."

"People learn to read pictures just as they learn to read the pages in a book. This is not recognised because education in reading pictures is an informal process. It goes on automatically in societies where a variety of pictures are presented daily through a variety of media. In social environments with no pictorial tradition or very few pictorial representations - the situation in remote African villages - the informal process of learning to read pictures simply does not occur. It is important to understand that perspective is nothing more than a pictorial or artistic convention which appeared in European painting as late as the Renaissance."

With the REFLECT pilots we have aimed to develop a method which builds on these ideas in a practical way, bridging the gulf that has developed between visual and alphabetic literacy.

2.8 Numeracy

Most literacy programmes either overlook numeracy or treat it as being of secondary importance to reading and writing words. Even the more radical and progressive literacy programmes rarely adapt the teaching of numeracy to adults and most fall back on traditional methods - treating adults like children.

This is a serious problem because most adults already have considerable numeracy skills. Most adult learners know oral counting and some mathematical structures and have an art of mental arithmetic more or less adequate for their daily life. Some non-literate people (especially those involved in trade) may be better at mental arithmetic than *"educated"* people.

You do not have to teach people to speak before you teach them to read and write. Likewise you do not need to teach people to count or add up before you teach them written numeracy.

So what is the value of written numeracy? It is necessary primarily because people are aware of the limitations of memory for keeping numbers in mind and for memorising daily events involving numbers. With complex calculations people lose track of the sub-totals in their heads. Being able to write down numbers in such situations is a huge help - but it is not a matter of knowing how to write 1 or 6 or 10 - rather, the need is usually to be able to write down larger numbers. A numeracy programme must reach this level of teaching useful skills at an early stage. It should also focus on numeracy encountered in written form in people's daily lives and in helping people with different types of record keeping that might be of practical use to them (household accounts / small scale business accounts / projections etc).

To develop a numeracy programme suitable for adults, the starting point should be people's daily experience (the actual situations and types of calculation they have to do). This requires a socio-mathematical survey prior to starting the numeracy programme - but this is very rarely done. Efforts should be made to reinforce (rather than undermine or replace) mental arithmetic skills, so that there is a substantial improvement in the way that people carry out existing required calculations at the necessary point in everyday life. A well-targeted numeracy programme drawing on such approaches may be just as empowering or more empowering than literacy - as it can give people very practical skills for their everyday life. The REFLECT approach seeks to build in such elements, respecting adults as adults, and focusing on practical numeracy.

2.9 Gender

Until recently women's literacy was not given particular priority - despite the fact that levels of illiteracy amongst women are much higher than those amongst men worldwide. Between 1960 and 1985 the overall number of illiterates in the world rose by 154 million and of those, 133 million were women.

Along with other factors, illiteracy increases women's marginalisation from power. Yet, in the past most literacy campaigns have had male themes and male issues as dominant.

This is despite the fact that more and more research suggests the critical importance of women's literacy (see Bown's work *"Women, Literacy and Development"* ACTIONAID 1990). In a rural area, women are more likely to retain skills in the community for the good of the community (and pass them on to children) whereas men's literacy particularly in rural areas often causes migration (as they see literacy as an urban skill enabling them to get work).

When literacy programmes have focussed on women, particularly in recent years, they have often placed an emphasis on issues affecting the domestic role of women - whether nutrition, child-care or hygiene - ignoring and even undermining the productive and community roles of women. Existing roles are thus usually reinforced. Where there is a conscious attempt to challenge existing roles the result is often a very didactic approach with outsiders lecturing women about their oppression. It is very rare to find a programme which will provide women with space to reflect upon their roles and come to their own conclusions through their own analysis.

This shift towards recognising the importance of women's literacy may however impact negatively on men. Recent evaluations of the government literacy programmes in Uganda and Namibia note a growing trend for literacy to be seen as a *"women's thing"* which directly or indirectly excludes men. It is important to avoid this and to see the literacy process as something relevant to both men and women - ensuring that all themes are handled in a gender sensitive way. In some contexts there is a strong case for women's only groups. If these are supported, parallel access to separate classes for men should also be considered.

The importance of literacy within the wider process of women's empowerment has become increasingly apparent in recent years. In the Cairo Conference on Population women's literacy was agreed as one of the most effective (and least controversial) means to reduce population growth. The Beijing Conference reiterated this and placed women's literacy at the centre of the empowerment process.

However, all this support in theory has rarely been translated into practical support - because large question marks remain over the effectiveness of adult literacy programmes. Whilst most adult literacy programmes are failing (as highlighted by Abadzi), the rhetoric delivered at international conferences will be of limited value as it is unlikely that any new resources invested in women's literacy will have a significant impact. The mould of past literacy practice needs to be broken if some of these recent commitments to women's literacy are going to be translated into effective programmes on the ground.

3. The REFLECT method

Building on these different theoretical foundations ACTIONAID developed the REFLECT approach in pilot projects over a two year period (October 1993 - September 1995).

Rather than start from a primer, with the REFLECT approach, each literacy circle produces their own learning materials analysing their own village and their immediate circumstances.

Instead of starting each lesson with a so called codification, each Unit starts with the construction of a map, matrix, calendar or diagram. These are constructed on the ground using whatever materials are available locally - sticks, stones, seeds or beans, For example, in constructing a household by household map of the village the group may use sticks to represent the roads and paths, stones to represent houses, beans to represent the number of men in each house and seeds to represent women.

These techniques come from practitioners of Participatory Rural Appraisal. There are many different types of map and matrix, for example:

Maps:
Household Maps - showing all the houses in the community and for example, the number of people in each or the type of housing.
Agricultural Maps - showing the location of different crops and, for example, changing trends over the years or the level of productivity.
Natural Resource Maps - identifying sources of wood and water, to lead into discussion of environmental issues.
Land Tenancy Maps - to represent the ownership of land, whether individual, cooperative, large landowners and, for example to match land ownership to land use.

Calendars:
Rainfall Calendars - which represent climate patterns / trends and can lead to discussion of responses to droughts, floods.
Agricultural Work Calendars - on which the different activities (eg clearing, planting, weeding, fertilising, harvesting, storing, selling) associated with each major local crop are plotted.
Gender Workload Calendars - which represent the main activities of men and of women plotted through the year and which can lead to very structured reflection on gender roles.
Health Calendars - on which all principal local illnesses are identified and their relative occurance through the year is represented (leading often to very focussed debate on why different illnesses occur more often at different times).
Income and Expenditure Calendars - to explore patterns for a typical family through the year, itemised by source of income and type of expenditure

Matrices:
Crop Matrices - in which participants analyse each crop they grow against a set of criteria which they generate themselves
Health Matrices - where participants tabulate the curative strategies they follow for different illnesses (eg herbs, medicine, traditional healer, hospital) or analyse their understanding of the different causes of illnesses.
Credit Matrices - which involve participants listing the sources of credit that they have (eg family, friends, money-lender, credit union, bank) and the uses they make of the credit.
Matrices of Household Decisions - on which, for example, women represent their involvement in discussing, planning and implementing decisions in different areas of household life.

Diagrams:
Chapati diagram of Organisations - where participants represent on a venn diagram all the organizations within the community and those external organisations with an influence.
Diagrams of Informal Power Relations - which explore the powerful individuals within the community and their groupings, splinters, inter-relationships etc.

Other Techniques
Timelines - of a village or an organisation or an individual.
Transects - cross-sectional walks.
Flow Diagrams - to represent different processes.

All the learners can participate in helping construct one of these *"graphics"* on the ground and the graphic can be changed until everyone agrees it is accurate. Then, rather than go into someone's notebook (which is sometimes the case with PRA practice), in the literacy circle a copy is made on a large flipchart. But how? We can't use words and can't just put sticks and stones - we need pictures. But literacy teachers are not artists!

Fortunately we can anticipate many of the crops, illnesses, objects and activities which will come up in the construction of the different maps and matrices. So, a set of about 100 visual cards is developed in each project area, drawn by a local artist (and field-

tested) in each case. These are very simple outline drawings which can be easily copied.

These cards enable the transfer from the ground to paper and increasingly can be used to help construct maps etc on the ground. Each time a card is introduced for the first time it is discussed with the participants until it is recognised and accepted. After a few Units words are put alongside the pictures. Additional cards can be drawn by the participants or facilitator if other pictures are needed.

One phenomenon here is that drawing humbles the facilitators as usually they can't get things to look right. It is just like the way that learners can't get letters to look right and the pen for them is a clumsy tool at first. So even in the supposed area of expertise (with pen and paper) the facilitator is not seen as the only expert (indeed sometimes the other participants, though illiterate, are better at drawing). In the process there is also often a lot of humour.

The shift from three to two dimensions using pen and paper is the first step towards literacy. Participants gain confidence in using images and become more visually literate in the process.

Key words are then introduced on the map or matrix. We can anticipate many of the features that will come up and can therefore sequence the words to be introduced. The selection of words could be left to the choice of learners and in some cases is - but there is an advantage to planning in advance which words will be used at least in the first Units - to ensure that the most regular and basic syllables are introduced first - and that the first words are not too long or complex. Clearly the spatial location of the words on the maps or matrices, next to the simple pictures, helps participants to recognise and recall them - especially as the maps or matrices are kept on permanent display.

In the first Units the words can be subjected to a syllabic breakdown much like in other literacy programmes - with a big emphasis on rebuilding new words (not the rote chanting of syllables). However, a variety of approaches to work with reading and writing are used, even early on. The learners are asked to agree a few oral sentences describing the map they have produced and the facilitator writes these up and uses the material for reading practice (which can include asking learners to identify the syllables or words they know).

As the Units proceed so does the reading and writing. Rather than having just one word on a map or matrix, several words will be used (initially with the visual image alongside) providing the participants with vocabulary around the theme being discussed. This enables the participants to construct phrases independently from an early stage - based at first largely on words that have been generated by their own graphics. With each learner writing simple phrases and then all learners exchanging what they have written, a range of literacy skills can be promoted (creative writing, copying, reading ones own writing, reading others etc). With the focus on the language experience of the learners and their own creative, self-generated materials, the learners can rapidly advance to working with sentences, paragraphs, letters and basic documents.

There is a strong emphasis in REFLECT on the *"active"* process of learners' writing (rather than the comparatively *"passive"* process of reading). By focusing more on writing, reading comes comparatively easily. Self-generated writing helps people gain confidence, increasing the likelihood that they will acquire literate habits. The provision of supplementary reading materials for home reading is encouraged.

As every participant is encouraged to make a copy of the map or matrix in their book and then write associated phrases (and eventually sentences etc) they end up producing a real document of their own rather than have just having an exercise book full of scribbles.

REFLECT also places an emphasis on numeracy work which is sometimes overlooked by literacy programmes - even though numeracy skills are often of great practical value. But we do not treat adults like children as happens so often in numeracy work. Adults have highly developed mental arithmetic skills.In REFLECT, the focus is on practical skills and numeracy work arises directly out of maps or matrices participants have produced - or deals with themes explored in each Unit.

So what about that elusive ingredient, dialogue? Producing the maps and matrices itself depends on discussion and dialogue - and is structured by the task that the group collectively face. The literacy facilitator does not have to constantly guide or push the discussion in an artificial way as the discussion gathers its own momentum around the task. Focussed questions afterwards can explore key issues but are always directly related to the

participants' lives and village because the framework for the discussion is the map or matrix that they have produced themselves. Participants feel the issues are theirs not someone else's and as a result they are much more likely to engage in local actions.

For example, if the participants were simply looking at a primer with a picture of a deforested area and a key word *"tree"* or *"deforestation"*, experience shows that they would be unlikely to engage in substantial discussion. However, if they construct a natural resource map of their village identifying amongst other things, where there are trees - and if they then construct a comparative map to show how their village was twenty or thirty years ago - then they themselves will arrive at the problem of deforestation and in doing so will recognise it as an issue which directly affects their community. In such circumstances they are much more likely to do something about it - and this indeed has been the case in many communities where, after the construction of such maps in REFLECT circles, participants have organised village tree nurseries and tree planting programmes.

Whether the issue addressed is deforestation or soil erosion, health problems or community organisation, agricultural practices or population growth, the starting point for discussion is the participants' existing knowledge - and this knowledge is permanently recorded and displayed through the maps and matrices. We should never underestimate this - the learners are immensely knowledgeable - having both inherited community knowledge and knowledge accumulated through their own life experience. This existing knowledge must be the starting point of any effective development programme.

So, in a REFLECT programme, *"literacy"* does not come in from outside pretending to be the only worthwhile knowledge. Reading and writing are not seen as the only real skills and the participants are not made to feel as if they or their knowledge are invalidated. Literacy skills are thus more likely to fit into an existing framework of other skills - as another capacity of technique which will help them to systematise, analyse and apply their knowledge and their viewpoints.

This method means that participants are working collectively and actively producing a product with pen and paper. Each participant, by copying the maps in their own books can share them at home or with others to develop discussions outside the circle. At the end of the course in the three pilot projects each village had between twenty and thirty graphics produced by them about their own village - which is a wonderful resource for them to establish priorities and plan appropriate activities.

Those who organise a REFLECT programme, whether NGOs or government, also end up with a detailed survey of the area - which can serve as the basis for planning health, agriculture or other development programmes - knowing the starting point, knowing the existing knowledge of the communities, the gaps, the priorities, the attitudes of people and even their prejudices. The potential link to other aspects of development is clearly strong.

But sometimes we miss the most obvious. Perhaps the most important factor about the new REFLECT approach is that it is extremely enjoyable. REFLECT circles are relaxed environments, not threatening ones, and the learning is done alongside much good humour and laughter. Participants remain motivated and even excited by the literacy circles and in the process they build up a lot of self-confidence - particularly confidence in dealing with group situations. This is of fundamental importance, particularly for women. Learning to read and write is a difficult process and adults will not persevere unless they remain motivated and enjoy the wider group dynamics.

REFLECT in practice: a visit to a circle

To give you a flavour of a REFLECT circle it is worth recounting the experience from a visit to one in July 1995 in Uganda. The circle was in a small village called Sala City in Bundibugyo and participants had just met when we arrived. They were sitting, literally in a circle, under circular shelter that they themselves had built. The facilitator outlined that today they were going to construct a calendar identifying the times of the year when there was plenty of food or income and the times when there was little or no food or income. The participants stood up and left their shelter to stand in a semi circle around a cleared area of ground that they have come to call their *"mapping ground"*.

One participant wrote the numbers one to twelve on the ground with a stick and other participants then drew a large framework for the calendar. The facilitator asked whether there was a lot of food or income available in January and there was some discussion before one participant volunteered to indicate by lines that there was indeed a fair amount in January. The facilitator asked about February - whether there was more or less and why - and the participants started talking to each other about different crops and sources of income in February before agreeing there was less. The facilitator then asked month by month, with the discussion for each month lasting between three and five minutes and all twenty participants having something to say.

The calendar, once completed, showed there was almost no food or income available between May and August. The facilitator thus asked what they did to survive in those months - and then, what they could do to be able to survive better. The ensuing discussion was remarkable for the level of detail and the range of ideas that emerged with different participants drawing on different experiences to make their contributions. Some suggested late planting of different crops like rice, cassava or beans; others emphasised storing of crops (which led to detailed exchanges on advantages and disadvantages of storing different crops and how to do so effectively); one man spoke about drought resistant crops like yam; a woman emphasised the impact of family size on food availability; an older man spoke about different planting practices he'd learnt when living in the mountains including inter-cropping; whilst a younger woman challenged the traditional practice of giving away surplus crops at harvest time to relatives. Most of the participants were talking to each other, with the facilitator simply helping to stimulate or structure the discussion with the help of the calendar.

After an hour or so of discussion the participants returned to their circular shelter and started doing reading and writing practice drawing on key words that had come up from their discussion. The facilitator left to make a copy of the calendar on a large sheet of card, whilst the participants continued practising their writing. Unfortunately we then had to leave but I imagine the participants would have proceeded to share what each had tried to write and perhaps they would then together collectively write up an action plan or set of recommendations based on their discussions. It really was a wonderful process to observe. The participants, most of whom were women, were finding a voice and exchanging experiences which were of fundamental importance to their daily lives - indeed to their very survival - and the literacy work was arising directly out of that context.

4. The evaluation of the projects

4.1 Background to the projects

A local ACTIONAID fieldworker keeping the records for a Shomiti on Bhola Island, Bangladesh.

The two year action-research project was designed to test the use of PRA in adult literacy programmes in three very different contexts. This would enable us to observe the flexibility of the approach and would lead to various adaptations and innovations. The three pilot projects could not have been more diverse.

In Bundibugyo, Uganda the pilot was in a multi-lingual area where the main local language had never previously been written. In Bangladesh the pilot was with women's savings and credit groups in a conservative Islamic area and in El Salvador the pilot was with a grassroots NGO, COMUS (The United Communities of Usulutan - Comunidades Unidas de Usulutan) which is led by ex-guerrillas converting to peaceful methods after ten years in arms.

4.1.1 BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world with 110 million people on a land mass the size of England and Wales. Over 65% of the population are illiterate (78% of females). The government aims to reduce this to 38% by the year 2000 and has placed a particular priority on women's education.

In 1995 a new Directorate of Non-Formal Education is being established with Asian Development Bank / World Bank funding. An early priority for the DNFE is going to be targeting young adults (15-24), particularly females. Within this, support to the piloting of different implementation models is also to be emphasised. This provides a strong context for piloting new approaches to literacy such as REFLECT.

The project area for the REFLECT pilot was on Bhola, a delta island in the Bay of Bengal, in the extreme south of Bangladesh. It is a remote area (a 13 hour overnight launch journey from Dhaka) which has remained isolated from most processes of social change and development. The island is in a geographically vulnerable area under threat from severe cyclones. In a cyclone in 1971 it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of islanders died, though a similar cyclone in 1991 was less devastating.

The ACTIONAID programme was established on Char Fassion, Bhola Island in 1983. Over 12 years it has built up a large savings and credit programme targeted particularly at women. This programme is run through *"Shomitis"*, community groups with about 15 members each. There are now 24,000 members of this programme who access small loans (800 taka each, with up to three loans at any one time). The Shomitis meet regularly and act as a focus for discussion.

Establishing the shomiti programme was a major undertaking. At first women refused to leave their houses when ACTIONAID representatives entered the village. After some time they agreed to come out, but would do so only with a veil and two umbrellas to hide behind. Over time the umbrellas were discarded and more recently the veils have been lifted as women gain more confidence through the regular contact with Shomiti assistants. The Shomiti members receive 12 week training courses on a range of health and development issues. Some Shomitis have decided to start up Children's Learning Centres - particularly in areas where the nearest primary school is too far away for their children to reach. They contribute towards paying for a teacher and receive some help from ACTIONAID. Adult Literacy Centres are also started up where Shomitis request support.

Although women are the main point of contact for the Shomiti programme it has been documented over some time that most women hand over the

credit they receive to their husbands and do not participate much in deciding how the loans should be spent. Indeed, it seems that some men only tolerate women's involvement because the Shomiti is a source of credit for themselves.

In 1993 ACTIONAID started to develop concrete plans to phase out of the Bhola project. It had never been ACTIONAID's intention to continue indefinitely, but the decision that phase out should be completed by 2000 raised a number of key issues. It was realised that if the Shomitis were to have a life after ACTIONAID's support they would need to become self-managing with each woman being able to keep her own Savings and Credit records. The literacy centres to date had not been very successful and there had been almost no focus on numeracy. Over 85% of women remained illiterate. In July 1993 a review of the education programme on Bhola Island recommended that the adult literacy programme needed to:

- focus more on numeracy skills
- be more effective in teaching literacy
- be used as a basis for empowerment.

In January 1995 a new Project Director started and in recent months has developed with local staff a new vision for the future. It is now intended that a Peoples Organisation should be established to continue in the area after ACTIONAID's departure. For this to succeed the shomiti programme needs to be put on a more rigorous financial footing. Shomitis will increase from the present size of 15 to a minimum of 30 members. Interest rates will rise to cover operational costs and larger loans are to be made available in various categories from general credit to seasonal credit, poultry credits, credit in kind (eg for a rickshaw or boat) and collective credit. The use of loans will be supervised with training and support offered. Shomiti member representatives will gradually be brought in to the management of the entire programme. Local marketing will be promoted.

Strengthening the Shomiti members' capacities to manage their own programme will be vital for the success of this strategy over the next five years.

4.1.2 EL SALVADOR

El Salvador, on the Pacific Coast of Central America, is the most densely populated country in the Western hemisphere. Unequal distribution of land and wealth led to a brutal civil war in the 1980s in which over 75,000 people died and millions were either forced into refuge or displaced internally. In 1992, Peace Accords were signed between the government and the guerrillas which included a commitment to land reform and democratic elections. However, progress with the land reform has been slow and there were many accusations of irregularity in the elections won in March 1994 by the extreme right wing ruling party, ARENA.

The economy is now gradually recovering from the war, helped temporarily by much international aid for reconstruction. However, the biggest single form of income is now remittances from relatives who fled El Salvador during the war and are now working in the United States.

The education system in El Salvador reflects the polarisation of society with most resources benefiting the elite who manage to reach higher education. During the 1980s the war disrupted the little education that was available to the poor. Hundreds of rural schools were permanently closed and the high levels of internal displacement meant schools in marginal urban areas were often seriously overcrowded. The rural schools which remained open suffered extremely high drop out rates.

Despite some courageous initiatives in the 1980s, adult literacy programmes were rarely stable enough to be successful, primarily because literacy teachers were regarded as subversives by the army. Indeed teachers in general were often a target (within just one year, 136 were assassinated). Some alternative models of popular education were developed by the FMLN guerrillas in areas of the country under their control - led by "popular teachers". However, many of these experiences also suffered from a lack of continuity.

By the end of the 1980s less than a third of the school-aged population of El Salvador was covered by State schools. Private schools have flourished but these have tended to serve only the middle and upper classes (about 20% of the population). Since the peace accords there has been some increase in expenditure on education but serious problems of under-resourcing remain, particularly in rural areas.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Graffiti on the walls of damaged buildings in San Francisco Javier - one of the few *"literacy events"* in the lives of the people during the war

The pilot programme was conducted in the Department of Usulutan which was one of the most conflictive zones during the civil war, with control of the area fluctuating between the army and the guerrillas. The coffee plantations which dominated the landscape were abandoned for many years as it became impossible to harvest the coffee. Most people in the area sympathised with the guerrillas and indeed many of the young men and women (including boys and girls as young as 14) joined the guerrilla forces. They had little choice as their traditional form of employment as labourers on the coffee plantations had disappeared. In many areas, abandoned coffee was cut down and the poor grew maize and beans to feed themselves. In the late 1980s the communities in Central Usulutan, around the Taburete Hill, decided to organise themselves as civilians to try to improve their conditions. This would have led to army repression had it been open, so initially this organisation was clandestine. In the following years, with the wider movement for peace it was possible to come into the open and the *"United Communities of Usulutan"* (COMUS) was formed - as a grassroots organisation committed to improving the conditions of the poor in the area.

Gradually COMUS received external funding (initially from the Catholic Church) in order to run a credit programme for farmers. In 1992, with the support of ACTIONAID this diversified into an integrated development programme covering a range of activities. After the Peace Accords many demobilised guerrillas joined COMUS and the present director of COMUS was himself a guerrilla throughout the war.

One of the most important elements of the COMUS programme is now support to the land reform process - giving advice on legal rights and helping people to negotiate with central government to receive titles to land. Support is also given to people wishing to form cooperatives. The credit programme has gradually extended, backed up with technical advice from agronomists as many people who are now farmers have only ever worked as day labourers before and have little or no experience of growing food for themselves. Alongside this there is a primary health care programme with health promoters in each village - and a natural medicine programme developed to systematise the traditional knowledge of local committees.

Within COMUS's education programme the priority has been placed on adult literacy. For over a decade the primary schools scarcely functioned (and when they did they were not effective) and although the guerrillas ran some literacy classes most people missed any opportunity to receive any education. Adult literacy is thus a vital first step.

To run the literacy programme COMUS called on the expert support of a national NGO CIAZO (Inter-agency Committee for Literacy). CIAZO is a national NGO which specialises in popular education, particularly on adult literacy, providing training and technical support to some 30 grassroots organisations (covering a total of about 5,000 adults each year). The organisations which CIAZO supports sit on a management board of CIAZO itself, ensuring that CIAZO remains accountable to those who it serves. CIAZO plays the leading role in an umbrella group of education NGOs, has a joint programme with UNICEF and is widely regarded as the most established and professional NGO working in the area of adult literacy in El Salvador.

CIAZO has been running its literacy programme under the title *"Teaching Literacy for Peace"* for over three years. It has developed excellent primers and follow-up adult basic education materials. REFLECT was just one of three pilot programmes run by CIAZO in this period and CIAZO had no vested interest in making it work - particularly when the evaluation was to compare the REFLECT approach with CIAZO's own work developed carefully over several years.

4.1.3 UGANDA

Uganda has a population of 17 million people, 90% of whom live in rural areas. After two decades of conflict the country is experiencing a period of political and economic recovery under the National Resistance Movement. Agriculture is the main basis of the economy, with 80% of export earnings coming from coffee (though more than half of this currently disappears on debt servicing).

The literacy rate is officially 55% but is widely assumed to be lower. Women's literacy rates are even lower (officially 45%) reflecting the status of women in society. As in most countries women have lower incomes and reduced access to education and health care. The large number of households (approximately 40%) that are headed by women, are thus particularly vulnerable. However, national policy has increasingly put women's issues on the agenda, and the essential contribution of women to the development of the country is widely discussed.

Uganda is a multi-lingual country; the three main language groups being Bantu, Nilotic, and Central Sudanic. The official languages are Lugandan, and English. Most people understand and speak languages other than their mother tongue.

The pilot project area, Bundibugyo, is situated in the extreme South West of Uganda along the border with Zaire, approximately 400 Kms from Kampala. It is separated from the rest of the country by the Rwenzori mountain chain, and is accessed by one steeply winding road. Physical isolation is one of the most striking features of the district.

The District is divided into Ntoroko and Bwamba counties, and ACTIONAID works in the latter. Bwamba has a population of 92,300 divided between the highlands (40%) and the lowlands (60%) The area is thus divided by its topography, and even within the lowlands the land is crossed by steep ridges made by fast flowing mountain streams. Population density is very high (261 per sq.km) because most of the county is forest reserve which only the few remaining pygmies are allowed to inhabit.

Bwamba's economy almost wholly consists of a large number of self sufficient family farms, mainly operating at subsistence level. The increasing population density has led to land fragmentation, soil exhaustion and food insecurity. The area produces a great deal of Uganda's coffee, but prices paid to producers have always fluctuated - and usually not to the growers' advantage. Goods from outside are very expensive due to transport costs, and physical isolation makes profitable trading difficult.

The two main groups of people in Bundibugyo, the Bamba and the Bakonjo, have been dominated by the neighbouring Batoro people for a great part of their history. This has exacerbated economic problems as the development of the area was always neglected by the ruling Batoro. There are very few schools, roads or any other services.

Women have a very low status in Bwamba, are not allowed to speak before men (with no voice, therefore, in decision making), and are universally regarded as valuable human beings only in terms of their ability to produce crops and children. One

The market place in Bundibugyo town in the shadow of the Rwenzori mountains which isolate the district from the rest of Uganda. The border with Zaire is marked by the Semliki River, further isolating the area.

of the ways in which this low status expresses itself is in a woman's powerless position in marriage negotiations (bride price is paid to male relatives who thus have a vested interest in the arrangements) and in marriage (particularly as there is widespread polygamy). In addition, women have no right to assets, and although most adult women have their own micro economic projects, they need access to land to grow food for their children. It is estimated locally that just 25% of women are literate (and in some parishes fewer than 10%) compared to about 50% of men. Initial research revealed that this was seen by both women and men as a reason for their exclusion from decision making.

Rutoro, the language of the dominant Batoro, has been used for all official purposes - in offices, hospital, churches, schools - and most salaried posts have been held by Rutoro speakers. Literacy and education and power have all been confined to the Rutoro language. In fact the languages of Lubwisi and Lukonjo had not been systematically written down until the REFLECT literacy programme started. The languages are therefore still developing in their written form, and are a focus for local identity.

ACTIONAID spent four months in early 1992 on intensive research at village level in Bundibugyo aiming to develop a relationship of trust; understand the nature of people's lives; and find out their priorities for ACTIONAID'S work over the following ten years of the programme. Participatory Rural Appraisal was one of the research methodologies used. The development approach recommended following this research was as follows:

- focus on vulnerable groups, especially women.

- focus on capacity building for local structures. This led to support for elected Parish Councils for women only. Parish Councillors make all the key decisions about ACTIONAID supported activities in the parish and manage a devolved budget.

- a flexible planning and implementation cycle to respond to local demands. Integrated not sectoral approach.

- participatory approach to adult literacy (particularly for women) as an entry point activity.

In many respects Bundibugyo was an ideal area for piloting the REFLECT approach. Learners' enthusiasm for previously unwritten and underprivileged languages; the lack of disillusionment with literacy generally (quite different from people subjected to mass literacy campaigns); the political environment in Uganda, and the high calibre of ACTIONAID staff can all be counted as assets.

The less positive factors must not, however, be forgotten. These include the irregular attendance of learners (vulnerable due to their low income, poor health; heavy workload and extraordinarily difficult terrain); lack of external support for community actions from official agencies, the low status of women (majority of the learners) and the lack of reading materials in the mother tongue languages.

4.2 Starting up the new literacy programmes

4.2.1 UGANDA

Origins

During the course of the research in 1992, the need for an interactive, practical and participatory literacy methodology as an entry strategy emerged. The aim was to target women (as the poorest, least powerful members of the community) with an activity that would empower them to take control of their own development. There was some experience of using PRA in the initial research and so, when the experimental use of PRA within adult literacy was suggested the Bundibugyo ACTIONAID Project (BAP) team agreed to be the first testing ground.

Designing the manual

In August 1993, over four weeks, the local ACTIONAID team (with support from the Education Policy Analyst of AAUK) used the results of the initial research to write units for the facilitators' manual. Different PRA techniques (maps, matrices, calendars etc) were identified which would bring out detailed discussion on all the key themes that had emerged from local research (eg isolation, gender inequity, prevalence of preventable illnesses etc). Reading, writing and numeracy work were then woven around these maps and matrices.

Three months into the life of the classes, the manual was revisited by the same team, who added an appendix with more complex agricultural units, units on savings and credit, and numeracy.

Language Issues

After consultation the BAP team decided that the main local language, Lubwisi, would be the language most widely demanded by learners. However, they also felt that the learners in each circle should retain the final choice over language (and they might chose other local languages like Lukonjo or Rutoro). This presented a serious challenge. If the team was developing primers, three primers would be needed. Moreover, the main language Lubwisi, was previously unwritten.

There were mother tongue speakers of all the local languages in the BAP team. To develop a written form for Lubwisi, those who spoke Lubwisi but were literate in other languages, each wrote a few pages concerning local development issues in Lubwisi - drawing on orthographic conventions from other local languages. These were then compared and analysed and where differences were identified a consensus was reached. These same texts were then subjected to syllabic surveys, to identify the most common syllables, so that the first key words which were taught would yield many new words (once broken into syllabic families and reconstructed by learners). The manual itself, once completed was translated into Lubwisi by local BAP staff and then shared with local Lubwisi leaders and educated people who had a strong interest in the transcription of their language. This led to various alterations before the manual was printed - but once it was printed it had the full support of all key players in the local community.

To enable participants in each circle to chose their own language, appendices to the manual were elaborated separately, with help from Lukonjo and Rutoro speakers - to identify suitable literacy work in their languages which would arise out of the same sequence of Units. It was recognised that most facilitators were likely to be bilingual (or tri-lingual) and would be able to read the manual in either Lubwisi or English. What they needed was a list of key words in their own languages. These languages were thus also subjected to a syllabic survey and key words were identified using the regular syllables first. Certain other changes were also necessary (eg in Rutoro most words start with a vowel - so inverted syllables had to be introduced from the start). The result was that, with two appendices (in Lukonjo and Rutoro) the same manual could be used, covering the same themes in the same sequence, for any of three local languages. For example, in the first Unit, a natural resource map, the word *"kiti"* (tree) is used in Lubwisi, *"amikura"* (mountains) in Bokonjo and *"ekibira"* (forest) in Rutoro.

Visual cards

Visual cards which could be used with each Unit were designed and produced with a local artist. The aim was to produce cards which could be easily copied by the facilitators as they transferred graphics from ground to paper.

Selecting Parishes

For the REFLECT pilot four parishes were selected: Hakitara, Bubukwanga, Busoru, and Bundimarangya. These parishes were chosen from the ten parishes in the sub-county because ACTIONAID research revealed them as relatively disadvantaged economically and socially.

Facilitator Selection and Training

Facilitators were recruited by the Parish Councillors using a criteria of *"academic merit and commendable behaviour in public."* They are usually residents of the village where they teach. Sixty five facilitators were selected, but only four were women. This unfortunate situation arose because of women's restricted access to education, and perhaps also due to anxiety about exactly what the job would involve (more women have applied to be facilitators for the second cycle of classes). The basic education level of most facilitators varied between P7 (seven years of primary schooling) and S4 (four years of secondary school). This is the same range as the facilitator's in the government's pilot adult literacy project.

The initial training lasted for ten days and consisted of PRA experience followed by practice with the units - especially the link with literacy and numeracy. The facilitators were imbued with the principles of respect for the learners, and that they were working for the Parish Councillors - not ACTIONAID. Most of the facilitators had no previous experience, which was a big advantage in absorbing a methodology so different from that of the top-down formal education system (and even many other adult literacy methods) in Uganda. Facilitators then formed Parish Groups for fortnightly training sessions, and exchange of experiences. Refresher courses of a week were run by ACTIONAID every six months. This also provided an opportunity to make up new units as needed. Other support from ACTIONAID consists of visits by field workers. Due to the difficulties of travel, field workers have tended to visit facilitators with problems frequently, and leave smooth running classes to their own devices. Parish Councillors visit classes to check on the attendance of facilitator and learners.

Enrolment of Learners

A pre-literacy campaign with a local *"ngoma"* group served to raise community awareness of the start of the programme. Women were both self selecting (as illiterate) and also positively encouraged to enrol. In fact there was some confusion at the beginning about whether men were allowed to enrol.

In the first three months of 1994, learners were enrolling in the four parishes - about thirty per class with the majority being women but over a wide age range (18 to 80). After an initial meeting, most of the sixty five circles which were formed, started to construct shelters out of local timber and spear grass. Other community members assisted as they saw the shelters as useful for everyone. To help protect the structures from the most voracious and ever-present threat, ACTIONAID made an input of termite-killer at this stage.

Support from ACTIONAID

ACTIONAID has provided (through elected parish councils) incentive payments to facilitators (equivalent to about $20 a month), a manual, a set of visual cards, a blackboard and some large pieces of manila paper for each facilitator. Learners received a exercise book and a pencil. Some have received a second exercise book but where these have not been distributed quickly enough, learners have bought their own (a fairly cheap item in Uganda in any case).

Reading Materials

In view of the lack of reading materials, ACTIONAID has been gradually feeding in the following: a pamphlet on micro projects; a book on civic life, and a health booklet. These have all been specially written and produced for the new literates by the BAP literacy co-ordinator James Kanyesigye - and are all written in Lubwisi. In addition, learners have shown themselves very keen to contribute to a newsletter, especially with articles from their oral traditions (previously unrecorded in writing) and local history. These are published by ACTIONAID in a bi-lingual local newsletter *"Kukesa"*.

4.2.2 EL SALVADOR

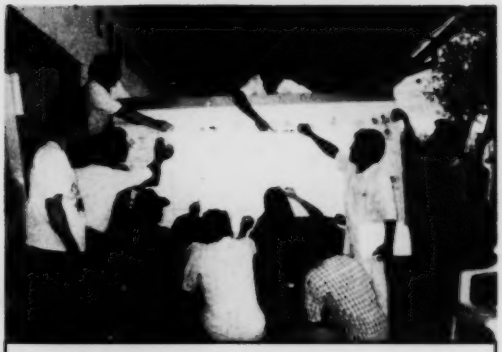
Starting Up

In November 1993 a team of four people (Oscar Garciaguierra and Marden Nochez Bonilla from CIAZO, David Archer from ACTIONAID UK and Abdon Machado Alvarez from COMUS) worked together over four weeks in order to develop a REFLECT manual adapted to the local context. In consultation with the leadership of COMUS the central objectives of the literacy programme were to promote participation, community development and local action.

The manual had the following:

UNITS	THEMES	KEY WORDS.
1. MAP OF HUMAN RESOURCES	water / fuel	*"camino"*
2. HOUSEHOLD MAP	population / housing	*"teja"*
3. MAP OF HUMAN RESOURCES	local knowledge	sobadora
4. AGRICULTURAL MAP	soils / planting	cafe
5. MAP OF LAND TENANCY	agrarian reform	parcela
6. RAINFALL CALENDAR	soil erosion / drought	lluvia
7. AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR	seed varieties	semillas
8. AGRIC. ANIMAL MATRIX	productive animals	ganado
9. CROP MATRIX	chemical/organic inputs	plaga
10. CALENDAR OF SHORTAGES	survival strategies	escases
11. BUYING/SELLING CALENDAR	intermediaries/cooperation	coyote
12. CALENDAR OF PURCHASES	inflation	quintal
INCOME / EXPENDITURE TREE		
13. SOURCES/USES OF CREDIT	credit /loansharks	credito
14. REVISION / PROJECTS MATRIX		
15. MATRIX ON CAUSES OF ILLNESS	causes/prevention	nino
16. MAP OF HEALTH RISKS	local preventive action	basura
17. CURATIVE MATRIX	local curative practice	examen
18. HERB MATRIX	documenting local knowledge	jingebre
19. NUTRITION MATRIX	malnutrition	desnutricion
20. VACCINATION CARDS	immunisation	polio
21. BODY MAPS	pregnancy	embarazada
22. MATRIX OF VICES	alcoholism	vicio
23. REVISION		
24. VENN DIAGRAM OF ORGANISATIONS	organizacion	COMUS
25. EVALUATION MATRIX OF ORGANISATIONS	aid	organizacion
26. TABLE OF PARTICIPATION	self help	participacion
27. DAILY ROUTINE TABLE	gender roles	mujeres
28. EDUCATION MATRIX	children's education	escuela
29. HUMAN RIGHTS TABLE	abuse / violations	reclutamiento
30. DISPLACEMENT MAP	effects of war	refugiado
31. PEACE ACCORDS LIST	land reform	acuerdos
32. NATIONAL BUDGET PIE	national priorities	
33. WELL BEING RANKING	local causes of poverty	
34. IDEAL FUTURE MAP	local priorities	
35. REVISION / DESIGN OF POST-LITERACY		
36. SPECIAL UNIT - MATRIX OF POLITICAL PARTIES		

Visual cards were prepared by Alfredo Burgos in January 1994 - a total of 180 cards (which was too many). Although the cards were very well drawn and had some good comic detail to stimulate learners, they were in the end too detailed and almost impossible to use. They were not numbered or colour-coded and had no words written on them or any reference list. Given these shortcomings, despite being good pictures they were barely used.



Training in the use of graphics for facilitators in Usulatan.

The first training began in January / February 1994 and the majority of the literacy circles opened in March 1994. Training was undertaken by the COMUS Promoter (initially only one) and the CIAZO adviser.

The Promoters and the Technical Adviser

The literacy programme was effectively organised by the education promoter in COMUS, Abdon Machado, a forty year old man who was illiterate himself until the age of 23. Two other literacy promoters joined during the year (Ovilio, who has just third grade primary education and Juan who started as a voluntary literacy teacher). Training and support in the process of documenting the experience was provided by the CIAZO adviser, Oscar. The contrast of styles between Oscar (who is from an urban, middle class educated family) and Abdon (who is a campesino) led to considerable tensions and personality clashes at times. Nevertheless, both had something important to offer to the programme.

Abdon Machado, the coordinator of the REFLECT programme for COMUS.

The Literacy facilitators

A total of 23 literacy facilitators received training. Some of them have left (eg there have been five changes of facilitators in Galingagua and four changes in EL Zungano). In some literacy circles there were two facilitators who rotated or who shared the work in various ways. All the facilitators came from the communities where they worked and were either nominated by their community or volunteered at a community assembly. The work was completely voluntary and so it was sometimes difficult to find willing people and there was little prospect of selecting those who were *"suitable"* - the promoters felt anyone who was willing to try should be offered training.

Each facilitator who volunteered was given ten days initial training and then attended two days a month follow-up training in which facilitators shared their experiences and planned for the coming weeks. The facilitators received travel costs and food for the training days which was considered essential to maintain their involvement. Some other small tokens of appreciation have been given such as small rucksacks and baseball caps.

There has been a lively debate about the nature of voluntary work and whether honorariums or stipends should be paid. Certainly payment for training days (when they miss whole days which could otherwise be spent productively in their fields) seemed essential and there were some tensions when this was nearly stopped. However, the motivation of the facilitators is impressively high. Over 80% of the facilitators say their primary aim has been to *"help others"*. Other motivations that were mentioned were the desire to exchange experiences with others (mentioned by 47%), the desire to learn more themselves (40%) or to gain new experiences (27%).

Asked the question: *"Who are you working with?"* the majority (67%) mentioned their community (instead of CIAZO or COMUS). Asked *"Who are you working for?"* the answer was even stronger

(87% said, *"my community"*). This was felt to be an important indicator that the facilitators were genuinely working out of commitment.

Most literacy facilitators had an education level around 6th grade primary. Some had received just three years of primary schooling and had difficulty reading and writing themselves (but wanted to share the little that they knew). Others had attended secondary school. This range of education levels was found to be very important in the evaluation.

One of the definite achievements of the literacy programme, mentioned by all observers, has been the development of a strong team feeling amongst the literacy facilitators. In general 18 arrive at each training day and they spend an evening together each month, often singing or telling stories. They have formed a formal committee to allocate responsibilities between them and they have even formed a musical group which tours villages, playing when new literacy classes are opened (with songs specially written for the occasions). In each village the literacy facilitators have also helped to form an education committee which addresses not just questions of adult literacy but also education provision for children.

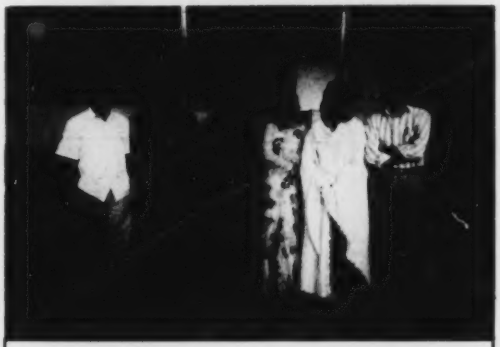
The Learners

Most literacy circles started up with between 10 and 20 people Most of the learners were men (only 32% were women), a fact which may relate in part to the lack of gender sensitivity in the rest of the work of COMUS. All the learners were peasants who made a living from the land, whether working in cooperatives, being small-holders or scraping a living as landless labourers on large plantations. The main motivation of the learners was, of course, to learn to read and write. However, more than half also mentioned a desire to learn numeracy, 19% expected that they would discuss local issues and 10% said their aim was generally to help the cooperative. Joining the literacy circle was not always easy for the learners: almost a third of learners said their friends laughed at them and ten percent of learners even faced laughter within their own family.

Local musicians promoting REFLECT in the pre-literacy campaign.

4.2.3 BANGLADESH

Bangladesh was the last of the three pilot programmes to be set up, with the work on training and manual development taking place in March 1994. Over a four week period a team of seven people (two ACTIONAID staff from Bhola, two from Jamalpur, two from Tikkapara and one from AAUK) developed the Bhola manual. The programme was designed exclusively for women and was targeted at women who were already organised into the shomitis (savings and credit groups).



The Bangladeshi team which developed the REFLECT manual for Bhola Island.

The objectives of the programme were:

- to enable the women to develop sufficient literacy skills to read things encountered in their daily lives and write simple phrases about their lives.

- to provide the women with the numeracy skills necessary to manage their own savings and credit books and deal with money, measurements, weights etc with more confidence.

- to enable the women to share their experiences and knowledge so as to increase each member's ability to participate more in decisions within their

households and in the wider community.

The manual included a strong focus on Savings and Credit, including details of the Savings and Credit pass book, preference ranking on loan use, projections on loans, an intra-household decision making matrix, units about the Shomiti itself and a broad range of Units on health:

1. HABITATION / HOUSING MAP
2. NATURAL RESOURCE MAP
3. AGRICULTURAL MAP
4. RAINFALL CALENDAR
5. WOMEN'S AND MEN'S WORK CALENDAR
6. FOOD AVAILABILITY CALENDAR
7. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE CALENDAR
8. PRICE OF BASIC COMMODITIES CALENDAR
9. SOURCES AND USES OF CREDIT MATRIX
10. SAVINGS AND CREDIT BOOKS - PART 1
11. PREFERENCE RANKING - USE OF LOANS / USE OF SAVINGS
12. PROJECTIONS OF DIFFERENT LOAN USE, BENEFITS / RISKS (VARIOUS)

13. SCHOOLING OF CHILDREN / EDUCATION MATRIX
14. HEALTH CALENDAR and MATRIX OF CAUSES
15. HEALTH SEVERITY MATRIX
16. HEALTH CURATIVE MATRIX
17. HEALTH HERBAL MEDICINE MATRIX
18. HEALTH AND HYGIENE MAP
19. VACCINATION CARDS OF CHILDREN
20. RANKING OF FOODS BY VITAMIN VALUE / HEALTHINESS
21. PROCESS ANALYSIS OF CAKES

22. WELL-BEING RANKING
23. OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVICES MAP
24. CHAPATI OF INFORMAL SOCIAL STRUCTURES
25. TIMELINE OF VILLAGE
26. PAST AND FUTURE OF SHOMITI
27. SAVINGS AND CREDIT BOOKS (PART 2.)
28. DECISION MAKING IN HOUSEHOLD MATRIX
29. PICTURE OF AN IDEAL FUTURE / ACTION PLANNING

The initial manual was written in English with key words in Bengali. This was then translated and printed in Bengali in April/May. During this time 75 visual cards were also produced by an artist following a visit to Bhola. In May ten shomitis for inclusion within the initial project were selected.

Facilitators were selected at the same time. All facilitators were women and were local to the community where they teach. Most were young and had an education level of higher secondary (about 11 years education) - which is higher than the average education level of facilitators in El Salvador and Uganda. Three of the facilitators in Bhola were married.

The facilitators were given ten days initial training in June. The literacy circles were opened in early July. The sum of 650 taka a month was paid to facilitators as an honorarium. All facilitators attended ongoing exchange / training workshops every fortnight. Supervision and field support was also provided.

The REFLECT literacy centres started with an average of 15 participants, mostly women from the local Shomiti (though in some villages other women also joined). The one or two Shomiti members who were already literate did not join. Most REFLECT circles chose to meet in the afternoons, often from 4-6pm, though this has varied with the seasons and some circles shifted their classes to earlier in the afternoon. In one case a circle chose to meet from 7-9am. Almost all circles committed themselves to meet six days a week and have maintained this momentum.

The circles rarely had a sheltered meeting place. The norm was for women to meet in the compound of one of their homesteads, laying rush mats on the floor and sitting. Other than the facilitator's manuals and the visual cards, the only equipment was a blackboard with chalk, learners notebooks and pencils, and lots of large sheets of paper with felt tip pens for drawing.

The REFLECT planning team select and sequence Units for the Bhola Island manual.

4.3 Approaches to monitoring and evaluation of the pilot projects

The three pilot REFLECT programmes each required a slightly different approach to monitoring and evaluation given the contexts of the programmes and the different capacities of the organisations involved.

The evaluation was potentially very problematic as the original ODA funding was focussed on research and evaluation, but required only an internal evaluation by ACTIONAID to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the REFLECT approach in different settings. However, the level of interest in REFLECT (from other NGOs, government personnel, donors and academics) required us to do evaluations which would stand up to an increasingly large external audience (in over twenty countries). The potential *"conflict of interests"* could not be ignored. These were innovative literacy programmes that had been set up by ACTIONAID and which were to be evaluated by ACTIONAID. To satisfy this audience we involved neutral / external evaluators in all three cases and sought to take a self-critical approach at all times.

A second key issue for the evaluations was the need to balance traditional methodologies with more innovative approaches which would be appropriate for the wider aims and participatory nature of the REFLECT process. All three evaluations thus included the testing of basic literacy and numeracy skills (using standard traditional tests) as well as the evaluation of the wider impact on empowerment and community development (eg using the construction of graphics by learners and semi-structured interviews of everyone directly and indirectly involved).

A third key issue concerned the comparability of the REFLECT circles with more traditional literacy classes. If we evaluated the REFLECT circles in the three pilots in isolation and found excellent results we would not be able to determine whether the results were due to the REFLECT methodology or were caused by other factors. In each of the pilots we had therefore identified Control Groups - other literacy programmes using more traditional, primer-based methods in neighbouring or comparable areas. These Control Groups were identified at the time of starting up the REFLECT circles and were monitored and evaluated over the same time period, using the same methods. By comparing the results we would thus be able to determine the relative effectiveness of the REFLECT approach compared to a primer-based approach.

A fourth issue that needs to be noted concerns the timeframe of the evaluations. The evaluations were done just 12 or 18 months after the literacy programmes had started. This was inevitable given the 2 year timeframe for the pilot project. To fully evaluate the sustained impact of these programmes would require a longer time frame (perhaps 3 years from the start up) and would still not address some of the broader questions concerning long term sustainability or how REFLECT would work on a larger scale.

4.3.1 BANGLADESH

Control Groups

In May 1994, at the same time as the REFLECT circles were identified, and ensuring that similar criteria were applied (eg Hindu/Moslem balance, distance from main road etc), ten control centres were also identified in Bhola which would be monitored closely but would continue using a primer-based approach. The primer used was devised by Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) and is widely regarded as one of the best in Bangladesh. These Centres received, from ACTIONAID, the normal support provided to literacy centres using FIVDB materials - in relation to training and materials. Baseline information was taken on these Control centres and the REFLECT centres to ensure that the starting points were consistent.

Specifically an initial test was done to determine whether any of the women had an initial level of literacy. Some were found who could write their name (evenly spread between REFLECT and Control groups) but they were unable to identify the letters that made up their name and could not read or write anything else.

Ongoing Monitoring

The ACTIONAID Bhola staff maintained close contact with all REFLECT and Control group

Literacy Centres. Fortnightly workshops were used for detailed monitoring purposes as well as for ongoing training. ACTIONAID's broader monitoring and evaluation system for Bhola was also used to monitor progress.

Evaluation Phase One: External evaluation

In February 1995 the ODA supported an external evaluation of the REFLECT pilot project led by Professor Rahman, Director of the Bangladesh Government's Non-Formal Education Expansion Programme, and Habibur Rahman, Coordinator of the Campaign for Popular Education CAMPE (an umbrella group of 200 Bangladeshi NGO's working in education). This evaluation focused on reading, writing and numeracy skills with only brief reference to life skills.

Evaluation Phase Two: Wider empowerment

The aim of phase two of the evaluation was to wrap up elements left over from the first phase and to focus on empowerment. It was undertaken by Ratindranath Pal (Deputy Director of the Centre for Studies in Sustainable Development) helped by David Archer, Rezaul Chowdhury, Shajahan and Nazrul. It involved:

- a review of secondary materials;
- construction of graphics with learners (70% sample)
- semi-structured interviews with learners (30% sample);
- an evaluation workshop with facilitators.

The issues covered included:

- content and quality of graphics / learner's books;
- time use in the circles;
- learner's self evaluation of process / impact;
- use and impact of each graphic;
- intra-household decision making;
- mobility of women;
- impact on children's education (enrolment and attendance)
- impact on the shomiti:
- impact on use of loans;
- local / personal actions prompted by the literacy circle;
- attitudes to selected issues;
- new areas of knowledge;
- the impact on the facilitator's themselves (role / perception in the community);
- attitudes of community leaders / men.

It should be noted that by the time of this second evaluation the Control Group centres were closed and it was therefore not feasible to get comparative data.

4.3.2 UGANDA

Control Group

Unlike Bangladesh it was not possible in Uganda to identify another literacy programme in the same geographical area as the REFLECT pilot. In Bundibugyo there were no other adult literacy initiatives underway or planned. Instead, it was decided to use a literacy programme supported by ACTIONAID in another area of the country (Mityana in Mubende District) as a control group. This literacy programme is regarded as a positive model by many involved in adult literacy in Uganda - and the fact that it was an ACTIONAID programme would help to ensure that there was no vested interest in elevating one programme over the other.

Planning meeting for the evaluation team in Bundibugyo.

Evaluation

The evaluation was undertaken by a team of 16 people including Sara Cottingham of ACTIONAID, senior literacy experts from Uganda (including representatives of the umbrella group Uganda Joint Action for Adult Education and the Coordinator of *"Literacy and Adult Basic Education"*, LABE) and other ACTIONAID staff (including representatives from the Mityana control group programme).

The evaluation was conducted during the period of the graduations, and it was therefore easier for the

evaluation team to present the concept of evaluation to learners, and to focus on their views. The team's most important tools were PRA formats, to structure class discussions in an effective and participatory way, and to provide a permanent record of the evaluation for each literacy class. They covered:

- self-evaluation of progress in literacy and numeracy skills,
- changes made in their own lives by every learner (gender disaggregated);
- whole group evaluation of the division of time between graphic construction, discussion and the three skills,
- the success of Action Points arising from each unit covered.

When the PRA formats were completed the class drew their own conclusions, and were thus able to get an instant feedback from the activity, as opposed to awaiting an ACTIONAID report.

This information was cross checked through intensive interviewing of:

- learners;
- learners who had decided to leave the class;
- Parish Councillors responsible for classes,
- Resistance Councillors (elected local leaders) from villages with a class;
- facilitators,
- some specialist personnel involved with carrying out Action Points (egs. water staff, District Education Officer).

This had the advantage of involving the broader community in a positive way, rather than merely informing them of what was in progress.

Literacy and Numeracy tests were also administered in order to allow different audiences to make comparisons. It was hoped that we could avoid establishing a culture of testing. All results were gender disaggregated.

Twenty-four classes (2/5 or 40% of the total number of classes) participated in the evaluation. This was a large sample in statistical terms, and it was felt that conclusions could be extrapolated for all sixty one classes with confidence. This sample was selected to include six classes from each parish, with a range of classes who had taken up the REFLECT methodology to varying degrees, but otherwise the process was entirely random.

4.3.3 EL SALVADOR

The Control Groups

In El Salvador the evaluation was led by CIAZO, the national NGO specialising in adult literacy with whom the pilot project with COMUS was undertaken. Although CIAZO were involved in the pilot we felt they were also neutral in that the control group used was their own work in other areas which they have built up over five years with 30 different grassroots organisations. They had no vested interest in showing the REFLECT pilot (which is very small scale within their national programme) to have been more successful than the bulk of their own literacy work. Rather they wished to critically review the work in order to help them define their future methodology.

CIAZO chose two types of control group: firstly their other work with grassroots organizations similar to COMUS (one organization in Usulutan - Codecosta, and one in Conchagua) and secondly with their more recent work with local government at the municipal level with UNICEF. It proved difficult to collect all the data from these control groups but sufficient data was found to provide a clear comparison and this was then reinforced through discussions with CIAZO advisers from across the country.

Monitoring

Basic monitoring of the literacy circles took place on a permanent basis through support visits of the COMUS promoters and through the monthly workshops. Each literacy facilitator also maintained a notebook to document key events and debates in their circle.

The Evaluation

In March 1994 CIAZO, COMUS and ACTIONAID worked together to establish a detailed methodology for the evaluation and to field test some formats. Most of the evaluation work was then conducted between March and May 1995 by a team of 2 CIAZO staff (Luis and Oscar) and 3 COMUS staff (Juan, Ovilio, Abdon). Other CIAZO staff helped collect data from the control group (particularly Arantza). The evaluation data was consolidated and analysed in ten days of May with the help of other CIAZO personnel (including Nicolas Foroni, Arantza and Blanca), David Archer (ACTIONAID) and Sandrine Tiller (Latin American Coordinator of the World University Service).

The evaluation team reviewed basic information and statistics and conducted literacy and numeracy tests. A range of structured interviews were designed and various matrices were elaborated which could be completed with learners in a participatory way. All these formats were pre-tested in March and adapted in the light of this pre-testing. A particular effort was made to *"close"* open-ended questions during this pre-testing period so as to make the forms easier to complete.

The full scope of the evaluation involved:

	REFLECT/COMUS	CONTROL GROUP
Basic Literacy and Numeracy Tests	**44 learners**	**74 learners**
Matrix: Self-evaluation of Learning	**34 learners**	**7 learners**
Matrix: Self-evaluation of Impact	**32 learners**	**7 learners**
Table: Participation in Organisations	**36 learners**	-
Table: Community Actions	**4 circles**	-
Diagram: Time-use in circle	**7 circles**	**1 circle**
Self-evaluation of facilitators	**15 facilitators**	-
Evaluation of training	**15 facilitators**	-
Structured Interviews: learners	**37 learners**	**18 learners**
Structured Interviews: drop outs	**18 people**	**5 people**
Structured Interviews: facilitators	**15 facilitators**	**5 facils.**
Structured Interviews: comm leaders	**18 leaders**	**5 leaders**
Structured Interviews: promoters	**3 promoters**	**2 promoters**
Structured Interviews: leaders of COMUS	**5 people**	
Structured Interviews: leaders of CIAZO	**2 people**	

4.4 Monitoring progress & problems in the pilot projects

4.4.1 BANGLADESH

Observations on the progress of REFLECT circles

Rate of progress

By November 1994, just four months into the literacy course the learners had covered about ten Units, representing a much more rapid progress through the manual than in Uganda and El Salvador. Partly this was due to the regularity of classes (six days a week compared to two or three days a week in Uganda and El Salvador). In November various circles were visited by participants from India, Uganda, South Africa, El Salvador, Spain and the UK - all of whom had come for an International Workshop on REFLECT held in Dhaka. Whilst probably disrupting progress a little this also added to the motivation of learners - a feeling that they were part of a much wider experiment with REFLECT.

By February, the time of the first evaluation, most circles had reached Unit 14 and by May (the time of the second evaluation) most had reach Unit 19 or 20. No attempt had been made in the design of the manual to determine what time period was required to cover each Unit or the whole course. This indeed had been actively resisted as it was felt inappropriate to impose timing on a method which had no previous field application. Moreover, it was felt that literacy programmes which define a time period (whether 6 months, 9 months or a year) run the risk that learners will feel they have finished at the end of the period and will leave the Centre, only to lose their skills a few months later. Success in adult literacy depends in part on continuity.

Overall participation

In the evaluation visits during a three to four hour meeting with the REFLECT Centres (involving construction of matrices, structured group discussion and interviews), notes were kept on the level of participation of different women. This may not be a fully accurate reflection of participation in the normal functioning of the circle (which would perhaps be higher) as it involved dealing with male outsiders to the community.

The high level of participation is striking and the table below, though impressionistic, reflects what many people have observed in practice. This is in clear contrast to the Control Group centres where levels of participation are more muted and the confidence of women does not seem so high.

Observations on the methodology in practice

The evaluators reviewed each map and matrix produced by seven of the literacy circles and a mark out of ten was given based on the following criteria:

- accuracy of the graphic construction (in relation to manual);
- quality of the graphic (care over detail);
- level of interpretation and analysis of the graphic;
- value of graphic to daily lives as expressed by learners;

The results of this review are detailed overleaf (each literacy circle is referred to by the local shomiti number):

Shomiti number	CU 109 M	CU 115 H	JI 193 M	JI 209 M	JI 195 M	JI 203 M	JI 207 H	TOTAL
Total present	12	10	11	11	9	11	10	74
Very active	8	7	6	9	9	7	8	54 = 73%
Some participation	3	3	3	2	0	2	2	15 = 20%
Almost no particip.	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	5 = 7%

(M = Moslem group. H = Hindu group.)

Shomiti number	CU 109 M	CU 115 H	JI 193 M	JI 209 M	JI 195 M	JI 203 M	JI 207 H	Total	Ave.
1. HOUSEHOLD MAP	10	+ 8	+ 9	+ 9	+ 10	+ 7	+10	= 63-7	9.0
2. NATURAL RESOURCE MAP	7	+ 9	+ 7	+ 9	+ 9	+ 7	+ 4	= 52-7	7.4
3. AGRICULTURAL MAP	6	+ 8	+ 5	+ 4	+ 5	+ 3	+ 3	= 34-7	4.8
4. RAINFALL CALENDAR	8	+ 4	+ 5	+ 4	+ 6	+ 9	+10	= 46-7	6.6
5. GENDER WORK CALENDAR	7	+ 3	+ 7	+ 7	+ 8	+ 8	+ 9	= 49-7	7.0
6. FOOD AVAILABILITY CAL.	9	+ 6	+ 7	+ 8	+ 3	+ -	+ 7	= 40-6	6.6
7. INCOME/EXPENDITURE CAL.	7	+10	+ 6	+ 8	+ 9	+ 6	+ 9	= 55-7	7.9
8. BASIC COMMODITIES CAL.	8	+ 9	+ 7	+ 9	+ 9	+ 8	+10	= 60-7	8.6
9. CREDIT MATRIX	8	+ 4	+ 7	+ 2	+ 6	+ 8	+10	= 45-7	6.4
10.SAVINGS/CREDIT BOOKS	-	-	-	-	+ 8	+ -	+ -	= 8-1	8.0
11.PREFERENCE USE OF LOANS	5	+ 6	+ -	+ 3	+10	+ -	+ 5	= 29-5	5.8
12.PROJECTIONS OF LOAN USE	9	+ 6	+ -	+ -	+ 9	+ -	+ -	= 24-3	8.0
13.EDUCATION MATRIX	8	+ 8	+ 7	+ 8	+ -	+ -	+ 8	= 39-5	7.8
14.HEALTH CALENDAR	9	+ 6	+ 6	+10	+10	+ 9	+ 7	= 57-7	8.1
15.HEALTH SEVERITY MATRIX	5	+ 6	+ -	+ 8	+ 8	+ 6	+ -	= 33-5	6.6
16.HEALTH CURATIVE MATRIX	8	+ 8	+ 7	+10	+10	+ -	+ 9	= 52-6	8.6
17.HERBAL MEDICINE MATRIX	9	+ 9	+ 8	+10	+ 8	+ 9	+ 8	= 61-7	8.7
18.HEALTH AND HYGIENE MAP	8	+ 7	+ 9	+10	+ 9	+ 9	+ -	= 52-6	8.7
19.VACCINATION CARD	-	-	-	-	+ 9	+ -	+ -	=9-1	9.0
TOTAL:	131	117	97	119	146	89	109	= 808	
no. of units seen	17	17	14	16	18	12	14	= 108	
average per unit seen:	7.7	6.8	6.9	7.4	8.1	7.4	7.7	= 7.4	

Participants from a REFLECT circle display one of their graphics.

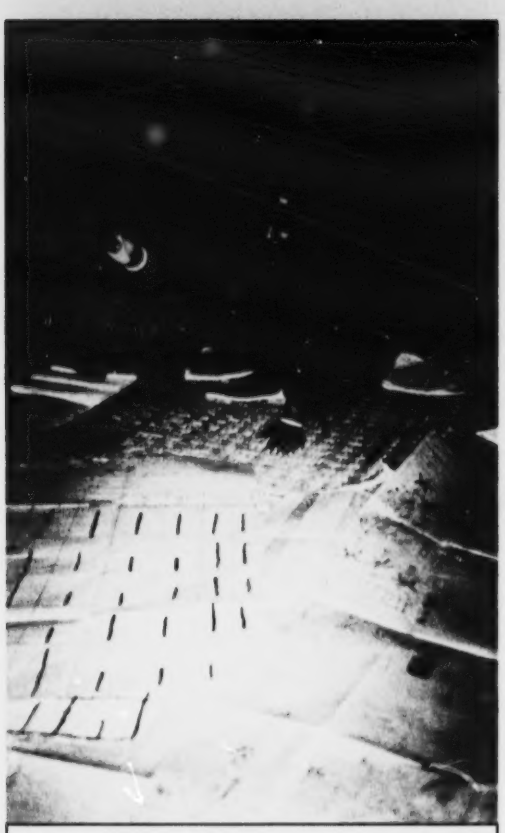
It is interesting to note that whilst there was some variation between Centres the variations were not huge. Learners and facilitators in all Centres had succeeded in constructing effective maps and matrices.

It can be seen that certain Units were more effective than others. For example the Household Map, the Basic Commodities Calendar, the Income and Expenditure Calendar, the Health Calendar, Curative Matrix, Herb Matrix and Health Map were all of consistently high quality. Some Units proved too complex and require simplification, particularly:

- Preference Ranking on the use of Loans,
- Projections of Loan Use
- Health Severity Matrix.

Generally the learners are very enthusiastic about their maps and matrices and quite rightly proud of their achievements. When challenged about the purpose of the graphics they are quick to respond and justify the work they have put into them. The learners seems to have become the biggest promoters of REFLECT. On one occasion we asked *"why waste your time on all of this? What is the point of all these lines on this piece of paper?"* The response was immediate from one learner, leaning to point at a part of the calendar on display: *"that's not just a line, that means we don't have enough food to eat in that month!"*

One remarkable feature of REFLECT in Bangladesh compared with Uganda and El Salvador is the quality of the maps and matrices



"That's not just a line; that means we don't have enough food to eat in that month."

produced by the learners. These are usually kept in pristine condition and are full of colour and detail. In most cases the learners themselves have drawn them, having initially etched them in the mud of the compound and illustrated them with seeds and other materials. The learners' books are also full of drawings whether of birds, animals, flowers or ornate patterns. There is a feeling of *"release"* - a sense of wonder at what can be done with just a pencil and a blank page - and there is a real joy in many of the images. The learners' books in the control groups have none of these pictures and seem full of copied words in comparison. The value of allowing, indeed encouraging, the development of drawing skills within a literacy class is not usually recognised - but the evidence here seems to strongly indicate a role for drawing - both for increasing motivation of learners, enabling them to have fun and at the same time providing them with the manual dexterity skills necessary for writing.

Another striking element about the REFLECT workbooks in comparison to those usually found in literacy classes is that there is a lot of writing. Rather than just having repetition of letters or syllables (of which there is very little) and rather than having words and phrases that are routinely copied (so all books are the same), each book has different phrases and different work which appears to show an emphasis on creative writing - based on the learners' own thoughts. There are also a lot of numbers to be seen, particularly with copies of the calendars or matrices and with calculations based on these.

Enrolment, attendance and drop out

The table below provides basic details about the 10 REFLECT Centres: the number enrolled, level of permanent drop out, average attendance after 6 months and average attendance after 10 months.

It should be noted that *"Average attendance"* was defined as the average number of learners in the circle over the previous month. It usually represents fewer than the total number who are still attending and indicates irregularity of attendance of different individuals for various reasons. This is analysed in the next section.

In total 78% of those who initially enrolled are still attending the literacy circles (though some are irregular). This compares to just 55% of those in the control groups. Three of the ten control group centres were closed down after four months owing to virtual non attendance.

Shomiti	**CU**	**CU**	**JI**	**JI**	**JI**	**JI**	**JI**	**JI**	**JI**	**CU**	
Number	109	115	193	195	203	209	207	127	201	125	Total
Initial enrolment	15	16	14	15	15	15	12	15	21	16	154
Permanent drop out	3	4	0	6	4	4	1	7	2	3	34
AVE. attendance (Dec)	10	8	7	7	8	7	7	3	6	7	70
AVE. attendance (May)	9	8	7	7	10	8	6	2	5	5	67

The 22% (34 women) in the REFLECT circles who permanently dropped out over the ten month period were followed up to determine their reasons - which are classified below:

opposition of men	10
marriage	5
permanent migration	5
lack of time	8
disinterest	5
other	1
	34

The first three factors are largely beyond the control of the learners and can be considered external. These external factors account for 59% of permanent drop outs. It should be noted that opposition of husbands or fathers was the most serious cause of drop out and did in various cases include beatings. In spite of such opposition some women have continued to attend.

It is also revealing to explore the reasons for irregular attendance. Through interviews the following were identified as the major reasons:

- Seasonal work-loads.

- Ongoing work pressures in the home.

- The rains: during the rainy season circles had no shelter and were forced to meet indoors in the badly lit and cramped conditions of someone's house.

- Men's attitudes: some men opposed the literacy circle from the beginning, seeing it as inappropriate activity for women. This of course varied. In one village it was commented: *"the men treat us badly if we are ignorant and they treat us worse if we try to learn"*. One elderly man specifically complained that the literacy circle was creating too much noise and was disturbing his afternoon sleep. The circle was forced to stop until they could reason with him (which they finally managed to do).

- Religious leaders: some religious leaders questioned whether the women should be learning Bengali and studying anything other than the Koran. They also criticised the drawing of human images - which is contrary to Islam. This could have been a serious block but was generally resolved by avoiding human figures or drawing symbols rather than literal images when human figures were needed. Most disputes with religious leaders were resolved early on though they reappeared during Ramadan when there was pressure for the women to either withdraw or switch to learning Arabic.

Some attendance dropped during Ramadan but it picked up again afterwards.

- Some women temporarily migrated in search of work with their husbands.

- Two circles suffered the loss of a facilitator (one married and one migrated out of the area) which disrupted learning for a period until a replacement could be found and trained.

- One common comment made by women who were irregular attenders was that they could not attend because they would have to leave their house unprotected which would leave them at risk from burglary. This goes to show how little the women usually leave their homesteads and the fear they have of making these first steps.

- Health problems were (as in all literacy programmes) a factor in irregular attendance.

Additional problems

The loss of the Education Coordinator who had translated the manual, coordinated the initial training and was providing follow up to the circles affected the REFLECT programme seriously. His departure threatened the continuity of the circles, particularly as another key staff member (the Monitoring and Evaluation coordinator) was not able to dedicate the amount of time needed to provide permanent support. Two new staff members became involved. Whilst both were very committed and capable staff neither had a background in education (one was previously working on credit, the other on tubewells) and neither had received the initial training in REFLECT. They learnt on the job and in the circumstances have done admirably in practice.

A wider problem that affected the programme indirectly involved staff morale within ACTIONAID Bhola. Following an external review of future options for the whole development programme in July 1994 the prospect of phaseout became associated with fears of widespread redundancy. There was also no Project Director in Bhola at this time which added to the confusion and loss of morale. Only with the appointment of a new Project Director did the mood improve (from January 1995). Once the strategic direction of the Bhola programme was re-defined morale was fully restored as staff became committed to a new vision of creating a People's Organisation which would continue after the departure of ACTIONAID.

4.4.2 Progress and problems in Uganda

Observations on the progress of REFLECT

Sixty-five classes started up in January 1994. However, due to loss of facilitators through mortality and dismissal by learners, the total number reduced to sixty-one by mid 1995.

The majority of classes had been running for one year, when graduation to took place. In that time, they had covered ten or eleven units as follows:

Natural Resources Map
Human Resources Map
Household by Household Map
Mobility Map
Ideal Futures Map
Agricultural Calendar
Crop Preference Matrix
Gender Workload Calendar
Rainfall Calendar
Hungry Season Calendar
Health Matrix - only covered by some groups.

The analysis of health issues had been done by some groups as a response to the epidemic of fatal dysentery in the period immediately preceding graduation. Facilitators had discussed whether or not to bring forward the unit in their parish groups, and then taken a decision with their learners.

The rate of progress through the course had not been part of the original REFLECT design, and in general ACTIONAID staff had encouraged facilitators to let the learners take their time, and not to feel that it was a mark of their own success to have pushed their group further through the course. This would have led to superficial discussions and easily-forgotten literacy skills.

It was very fortuitous, however, that learners were of a standard to graduate, at the same time as they were about to start the part of the course devoted to Savings and Credit management. This will clearly give a renewed sense of purpose to the circle meetings, (which will otherwise follow the same format).

The graduation ceremonies for learners were held in March - May in all four parishes. Facilitators had assessed their learners on a continuous basis: testing the reading aloud of words, sentences and paragraphs; writing letters in class, completing calculations on the blackboard, and understanding of the graphics. They discussed grading criteria in parish groups and with ACTIONAID staff, and categorised learners into pre-literate (did not graduate); low literate; mid literate, and high literate.

The majority of learners therefore received a certificate, and all agreed that no-one should be chased away from the class. It was considered important to show appreciation for learners'

Observing a REFLECT circle meeting in a circular shelter constructed by the participants.

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achievements, and the community felt it was inappropriate to start new literacy classes before current ones had graduated, so learners and facilitators organised a big ceremony in each parish. These ceremonies included drumming, dancing and drama focused on creative interpretations of REFLECT units (Hungry Season Song, women and men singing together to show new unity, Family Planning role-play etc) and testimonies on the value of literacy. All the messages presented showed articulate communities recording changes they perceived to be the result of REFLECT, and were thus considered to be snap-shot evidence for the evaluation process itself.

Observations on the methodology in practice

In all the sample classes visited in Bundibugyo, evaluators looked carefully at the maps and calendars drawn from each unit and asked learners to interpret their work. This was in order to assess the understanding of the learners and their facilitator of the process of graphic construction, and the analytical discussion vital for consolidation onto paper. This understanding was again explored in all interviews.

In almost all cases, the sequence and clarity of the annotated graphics was satisfactory to the evaluators. The consensus of all those questioned, was that the process assisted the learners in looking objectively at the advantages and disadvantages of specific aspects of their environment, and representing these in a visual code. *"We know where we are...and where other things are."* said one learner to explain this point. The graphics have the power of a collective view or decision - even before any actions are taken. They are perceived as records of discussion, and as frames of reference for the future (literally hanging on the walls of the literacy shelter).

Learning to read and write using annotations to the accumulating graphics, and learner-generated language from the free-ranging but related discussions, seemed to be an established process in all classes. Exercise books showed that with the exception of words and sentences freely formed from syllables covered, writing was based on unit discussions, and action points. The learner's level did not seem to make any difference to the perceived connection with the graphic and discussion. Whether writing single words or mini project proposals, learners presented themselves as being fully participating members in a dynamic group process.

The same could not be said about the role of numeracy in the REFLECT process. The basic writing of numbers was related to calendars (eg. marking months 1-12) and to the household by household map through the counting of different categories of people. This map also allowed the introduction of the multiplication table in a meaningful context. After this stage, however, there was no evidence of numeracy activities relating to agriculture, gender, hungry season etc. Learners were practising the four calculations in the abstract and it was hard to see how they would either remember or apply the skills in a practical context.

In general, especially as regards meaningful reading and writing, there was understanding and satisfaction in the community. Several facilitators made unsolicited comments on the effectiveness of the method, in relation to how it could be used to improve methods currently used in primary schools, showing their own understanding of the principles of the work. The only people who did not have much insight into the REFLECT process were some of the Parish Councillors and RCs. This was balanced, however, by those leaders who were actively involved themselves as learners or facilitators, or through having close family members in these roles.

To determine the learners' interest in different activities in class a table was constructed to see how much time they would like to spend on each in an ideal classroom setting. The aim was to test whether learners saw graphic construction and discussion as either a waste of time compared to acquiring *"real skills"*, or whether they were interested in these activities to the exclusion of literacy and numeracy. The table showed that learners would like to spend more time on graphic construction and discussion, but not as large an increase as desired for literacy and numeracy skills. In general there was a relative level of satisfaction with existing time allocation.

It was noted that no-one in the community had received any exposure to other literacy techniques, and had an enthusiastic tendency to regard REFLECT as the only method, the best method and their own. This certainly reduced their ability to look at the method itself objectively. The evaluation team tried to provide a balance by reading exercise

books looking for relevance, and by asking challenging questions about the maps and calendars. Learners were impressively articulate in explaining the graphics and the contents of their own books.

An examination of similar questions in the Control Group brought very different answers. There seemed to be no dynamic process around discussion of the Picture Charts (large posters with different pictures of everyday life which were used as a supplement to the primer). These were generally described as mere illustrations for the lesson; presenting situations either well known and obvious to the learners or unrealistic pictures, difficult to interpret. As codifications brought to the class for learners to deconstruct, they seemed to fail. There was no strategy for stimulating discussion. It seemed clear that most instructors would be able to spend very little time listening to learners before delivering their own pre-set conclusions on the topic for the day. It seemed possible for only an exceptionally knowledgeable and charismatic instructor to manage the class so that learners both developed analytical skills, and reached the required conclusion for the topic.

One instructor interviewed had used her own creativity by preparing songs and role plays to begin lessons in a different way, avoiding the tedium of always starting in the same way. However, it seemed to place a heavy burden on individual instructors and made the REFLECT method, where the pressure is equally balanced between learners and facilitator look much simpler to practice.

Enrolment, attendance and drop out

The coverage of the pilot, and the success rate in statistical terms, are shown in the table below.

	Total	Male	Female
Illiterates	3,853	1,313	2,540
Enrolled - January, 1994	1,763 100%	617 35%	1,146 65%
Not enrolled	2,090 100%	696 33%	1,394 67%
Graduated - March, 1995	1,209 100%	441 36%	768 64%
Retention rate	69%	71%	67%

There were many significant incidents in the area whilst the literacy programme was underway. Almost immediately after the programme started there was a large scale influx of refugees from neighbouring Zaire (pushed over the nearby border following increasingly intense fighting between the Zairean army and guerrillas). Most refugees were Lubwisi speaking and integrated with local communities, sometimes joining the literacy circles. However, a couple of months later the refugees were collected together and moved into refugee camps further inside Uganda. This caused some drop out and loss of momentum.

Meetings with the local Resistance Councils in May helped to revitalise many circles, but then in July came the *"hungry season"* - the time of year when there is least food or income available and many people have to migrate or work extra hours as day labourers to survive. At this time there was also a serious epidemic of cholera. In some villages the circles were actually closed down for a period - particularly when facilitators were recruited into a government *"defence"* campaign for 3 weeks.

By October the literacy circles had picked up again and were running well, but heavy rains in late November and December, building up to the Christmas break caused some new reductions. In early January 1995 new meetings were organised with local government all the way from village level through parish and sub-district to district level - in order to re-mobilise the circles. Attendance rose well. At the time of graduation in February / March each literacy circle had an average of about 25 participants (having started with between 30 and 35).

Whilst all of the above *"special"* factors influenced attendance the *"everyday"* factors must also be considered. Finding time for literacy when there are so many other responsibilities is not easy. Other priorities often have to take precedence, whether producing crops, selling and buying goods, producing and caring for children, taking community roles, and coping with emergencies. Non-literates in Bundibugyo (as elsewhere) are usually the least powerful and therefore most heavily burdened members of the community, and an examination of registers revealed that the typical learner was indeed irregular, and attended approximately 100 hours of classes out of a possible 208 hours. The main reasons for irregular attendance as expressed by learners in interviews are classified overleaf:

Barriers to attendance	Scores
Health problems (self and family)	55
Guests, domestic problems, violence	18
Agricultural and domestic work	17
Funerals, ceremonies, community meetings	17
Markets	2
Childbirth	2

It was noted from learners and female facilitators, that a healthy pregnancy and delivery was not considered a barrier to attending literacy classes. Usually pregnancy necessitated only a month's absence. This had previously been considered a *"problem"* of the woman learner. The unreliability of the facilitator was not considered a barrier by any learner interviewed (in contrast to the control group). Lastly, heavy rain, holiday periods and so on, tended to cause class to be cancelled altogether, rather than individuals not attending.

Baby in one hand - pen in another. A healthy pregnancy and delivery was not an obstacle to attendance.

In the control groups in Mityana the drop out of learners from the centres was a major problem. It proved difficult to maintain learner motivation and only 40% of the learners were still attending the centres after a year (compared to 69% in the REFLECT circles). The causes of drop out were similar in some ways (eg workload) though there was some evidence that learners left the controls groups through frustration with their lack of achievement (which was not a factor in the REFLECT circles).

4.4.3 PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS IN EL SALVADOR

Observations on the progress of REFLECT

CIAZO and COMUS had difficulty at first in assimilating the basic principles and methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal. They had no previous experience of PRA and had some fundamental doubts which did not surface within the initial period of developing the draft manual. These uncertainties led to a rather confused and overlong final version of the manual, visual cards that (despite being beautifully drawn and comic) were so detailed as to be un-useable and training for facilitators which failed to communicate some of the basic aspects of the REFLECT approach.

This situation gradually improved as the training progressed and COMUS and CIAZO personnel came to understand the methodology. However, a lot then depended on the training sessions and some of the voluntary facilitators undoubtedly had difficulty grasping the REFLECT methodology. For example, in most classes the graphics were constructed on tables (which COMUS promoters agreed with, arguing that for cultural reasons they could not use the ground) and in some cases they were constructed directly on to paper (rather than using moveable objects). This limited participation and meant whoever held the pen (almost invariably the facilitator) held power. There was even one case where a literacy facilitator said that he prepared maps and matrices in advance of the classes so as to progress more rapidly! This completely undermines the REFLECT approach: the graphics are not an end in themselves - they are a means to an end.

Whoever holds the pen holds the power. Constructing graphics directly onto paper limits participation.

The failure to clearly conceive the role of the graphics meant that in some circles the construction of the graphics was regarded as a separate activity and the reading, writing and numeracy work was not integrated with the graphics. The graphic would be constructed and then put to one side as the other activities were undertaken.

In recognition that there was an uneven take up of the REFLECT approach, in March 1995 it was agreed by all involved to classify the circles according to the extent that they had used the REFLECT method. Those circles where the method had been applied could be used to evaluate the impact of the method. In the circles where the method had not been applied the focus of the evaluation needed to be on why the method had not been used properly.

This classification was done through separate interviews with three COMUS promoters and the CIAZO adviser - each person was asked to score the circles according to the extent of their use of the method, focusing on the process by which graphics were constructed and then used. It was made very clear that this was not be a scoring of the overall success or achievement of the literacy circle (some circles might have been very successful using very traditional methods). The scores given by each person interviewed were very consistent and these were averaged out to give a mark out of 10. The circles with more than 5 (out of 10) can be said to have applied the method more or less. Those with less than 5 cannot really be said to have applied the method effectively.

Enrolment, attendance and drop out

The table below presents basic information about the literacy circles classified in order according to the extent to which they have used the REFLECT approach and showing basic information about the facilitators, enrolment and graduation.

	Level of use of method	Grade of Educ OF FAC.	No.of Train. Days	Date Start	Enrolment Initial M	Enrolment Initial W	Enrolment Final T	T	Graduation Apr '95 **	New Circles ***
Joya	9	11	11	7/2	20	9	29	17	14	Y 2
La Pita	9	6/6	12(5)	28/3	5	3	8	9	9	Y
Los Rios	8	6/6	11(9)	1/6	13	6	19	12	11	Y 2
El Carmen	7	6	7	14/2	4	8	12	12	12	Y 2
Las Conchas	7	6	13	15/2	11	5	16	12	10	Y 2
La Pena	6	4/9	5/5	15/2	10	10	20	13	10	Y 2
Quesera	6	3	12	14/4	11	1	12	12	9	Y 2
SUBTOTAL:							116	87(75%)	75(86%)	
Loma Pacha	5	6	9	15/2	18	8	26	12	8	N
Galingagua	4	*	*	28/3	21	8	29	15	11	Y 2
Horcones	4	6	3	1/10	14	3	17	17	7	N
El Coroz	3	4	6	13/7	11	3	14	8	?	Y
Jobalitos	3	3	10	22/2	15	6	21	6	?	N
Zungano	3	3/9	9/8	11/3	5	6	11	7	4	Y
SUBTOTAL:							118	65(55%)	30(46%)	
TOTAL:							234	152(65%)	85(56%)	

NOTES: ? = suspended

*** In Galingagua there were 5 different facilitators, all with an education level between 3rd & 6th grade.**

**** The statistics on graduation will be analysed in more detail in the next section on reading, writing and numeracy.**

***** The column on "new circles" means those circles which were reactivated for second level / post-literacy work in 1995. The number "2" after "Y" means that as well as a circle continuing to second level a new first level circle has started up in the same community. This is considered a useful indicator of the community's own perception of the value of the literacy circle - as it represents "word of mouth" support for the experience within the community.**

Analysis

1. There is a clear correlation between the level of education of the facilitator and the effective application of the REFLECT method. Those with less than sixth grade primary education had more difficulties. Those with more than sixth grade performed better. In comparison, the attendance at training sessions made little difference.

2. In literacy circles where the REFLECT method was effectively applied there has been a desire to continue learning in every case - with circles continuing to second grade. Moreover, in 6 of the 7 communities new literacy circles have been opened for other learners. Where the method has not been applied only 50% are continuing to second level and only one in six of the communities has shown a demand for a new first level circle.

3. This table shows an overall rate retention rate of 65% of those initially enrolled. However, it is worth emphasising that in those circles where the method has been effectively applied the retention rate has been significantly better (at 75%).

The reasons for irregular attendance provided by learners are tabulated below (with solutions suggested by the learners themselves).

Problem	**Possible solution**
52% agricultural work	Do work early
39% household work	Do work early
35% health problems	No comments
24% lack of water	Build a water tank
14% other meetings	No comments
14% distance of the circle	Change location
11% absence of facilitator	Get a new facilitator
11% celebrations	No comment
11% sports events	No comment

Clearly work-load is the most pressing problem and it is thus not surprising that at times of peak agricultural labour some of literacy circles were temporarily suspended. Suspension was unavoidable in those communities were people migrated to work on coffee harvests elsewhere in the country. This was not planned for sufficiently in advance and thus caused some demoralisation. It proved difficult to reactivate circles after they had been suspended in this way (whereas if the circles had each agreed an original schedule / calendar allowing for peak seasons then the suspension would not have been demoralising).

The learners who permanently dropped out of circles gave the following reasons:

22%	household / agricultural work
22%	eyesight
17%	suspension of circle
11%	the facilitator
11%	shame
5%	the party political matrix
12%	no response

This is revealing. Workload, whilst an obstacle for many people, was not usually the main reason for drop out. Poor eyesight appears very high which reminds us of the importance of addressing eyesight problems in tandem with literacy programmes.

Problems with the facilitator or the suspension of the circle appear significantly (in El Coroz, Cerro Verde, Galingagua and El Zungano the facilitators left for various reasons).

It is interesting that one learner mentioned the matrix on political parties as a cause for drop out. This matrix was poorly designed and could easily be used by facilitators for party political lectures (in direct contradiction with the intention of the REFLECT method). The use of it so early in the literacy programme (the elections were in March - just a month after the circles started) probably alienated many people.

During the process of the literacy programme another factor which was widely commented on was the failure of COMUS to live up to its promises of giving credit to the literacy circles. Two months into the programme the COMUS leadership agreed to make credit (of 5,000 colones) available to literacy centres for group productive projects (designed in part to help reinforce literacy skills) at a reduced interest rate. Each literacy circle discussed what they could do and prepared a credit request to COMUS. However, COMUS failed to fulfil its promise for more than six months which led to widespread cynicism, at times undermining the facilitator's credibility and weakening the potential for linking the literacy circles to the wider integrated programme of COMUS.

Additional problems

Other problems can be broadly divided between those relating to the Volunteer Facilitators and those of a more general nature.

The Volunteer facilitators had problems in carrying out their role, perhaps mostly because of a lack of time (mentioned by 67% of them) or a lack of support (mentioned by 27%). The lack of support from COMUS or CIAZO was particularly mentioned by facilitators in remote communities which are difficult to reach. The COMUS promoters and CIAZO adviser had just one motorcycle between them to reach the communities and otherwise depended on walking on hitching lifts with other vehicles.

In relation to workload, the fact that the facilitators come from the same community as the learners means that they have the same workload as the learners outside the literacy circle. With training, preparation for classes and the need to be present everyday (whereas learners could miss a day or two more easily when under pressure of work), the time involved was significant and often meant a loss of income.

Under such economic pressures it was difficult to sustain voluntary motivation. Pressures mounted when local health promoters who were previously volunteers started to receive pay from PROSAMI (a USAID funded programme within the national reconstruction process). COMUS's own *"zonal promoters"* (their first point of contact with each community) had also been paid in the past (though this was ended just before the literacy programme started). Comparing their position with others led the facilitators to desire a greater recognition of their commitment. Some facilitators left, demoralised - and when new ones were recruited to replace them it was not possible to offer intensive initial training so the new facilitator's struggled to pick up the methodology.

Within a few months each literacy circle progressed at a different rate, which is only natural, but this irregular progression was exaggerated where circles were temporarily suspended. This led to difficulties in the follow up training workshops which could not focus on practice of different Units which would be of immediate relevance to all facilitators.

The facilitators' own educational level proved to be a very important factor in the pilot experience. Those who had only third grade primary education had serious difficulties in reading the manual and problems taking notes in the training workshops. This made it difficult for them to replicate the methodology in practice. Moreover, their own problems in writing caused problems in their circles for the learners, for example when they wrote on the blackboard mixing small and capital letters. Those facilitators who had these problems also failed to maintain their notebooks.

As already mentioned the manual and visual cards proved to be a source of many problems. The manual was unnecessarily long (over 150 pages) and dense (with no illustrations) with too many technical or academic words. The guidelines were not clear in many cases. The sections on *"Information"* which were added to the manual were also much to long and tended to give the impression that this was the *"truth"* or the *"answer"* or the *"real knowledge"* given by the *"experts"*. The visual cards were very detailed pictures in many cases (almost codifications themselves) and could not be copied by the facilitators. The fact that there are so many of them and they are not numbered or referenced made them effectively un-useable by facilitators who thus had to improvise their own drawings (which many were embarrassed to do). Some facilitators hardly used visual cards and this probably limited participation of learners in the construction of graphics (there was less large scale visualisation).

General / Organisational Problems

Just a month after the launch of the literacy circles national (and local) elections were held in El Salvador (in March 1994) - the first democratic elections following the peace accords. This was a critical moment in Salvadorean history with the FMLN guerrillas who had been very strong in Usulutan, participating as a political party for the first time. There were political meetings and mobilisations in almost every community and this interrupted the process of the literacy circles almost before they had begun. It was difficult to focus on literacy and local developments when everyone was talking about party politics and national change. COMUS staff were making a big effort to be neutral although most personally felt very strongly pro-FMLN.

With the victory of ARENA in the national elections and of the Christian Democrats locally, there were further problems. Some COMUS staff could not believe the result and were very demoralised. Some even felt that they should have campaigned for the FMLN openly - and started blaming people for not voting for the *"frente"*. Locally there were accusations of vote-rigging, with dead people appearing on the electoral register and many live people not being given polling cards. ARENA and

PDC provided transport for their voters to the polls and reputedly intimidated people or bought their votes. The lack of awareness of the electoral process meant many people did not realise that their vote was truly confidential.

At the community level, COMUS tended to have links with the more active or politicised people - and this was reflected in the literacy circles and in the literacy facilitators. Many thus felt disillusioned and demoralised after the elections - wondering why it was that the FMLN had laid down arms if there was no access to political power through the ballot box. The demoralisation was widespread amongst other COMUS staff and this weakened the capacity to link the literacy work to other sectoral initiatives of COMUS for many months.

The elections, however, were only the most recent in a series of experiences which acted as blocks to *"participation"* for the campesinos of Usulutan. Contrary to the international image of Latin America being a place where "participation" and active mobilisation is easy to promote, the historical and social context of rural El Salvador presents many obstacles to real participation. The first block is the deeply ingrained traditional relationship between the campesinos and their patrons (the large plantation owners / landowners) - which was always very hierarchical, leaving only a passive role for the campesino.

The civil war tried to break these relations but the vertical military command structure of the guerrillas did not give a positive alternative experience for most campesinos. Then, most recently with the arrival of large scale international aid for reconstruction the majority of projects have been based on direct assistance, service delivery or donations - reinforcing the traditional passive and *"dependent"* role of campesinos. This *"asistencialismo"* builds upon the expectations of campesinos who have had few opportunities for (or experience of) active participation. In this context it is in fact extremely hard to promote community participation and initiative.

Related to the above is the reaction encountered in some communities who have had a lot of exposure to aid / development projects. There is a weariness with *"process"* and a desire for *"solutions"*. As commented by one person: *"we already know our problems and don't want to discuss them again - what we want is real solutions, which require money!"*

There were many obstacles to community mobilisation - not just the difficulties in promoting initial participation. Perhaps most fundamental was the fact that for the first months of the literacy programme very few communities had any legal titles to their land (and only some of them acquired titles during the process). As land reform was delayed (particularly after the elections) learners had little interest in mobilising for community actions relating to agriculture (the dominant themes of the early Units) because most involved making medium or long term investments in land over which they had no security (eg terracing for soil conservation, establishing nurseries, diversifying crops, experimenting with new methods). The *"climate"* was not appropriate for long term planning, risk taking or new initiatives - though in communities were land was then *"verified"* there was indeed that incentive.

In cases where there was an incentive to act, the literacy circles often found themselves faced with a problem of lacking the *"authority"* to act. The learners were only a section of their community or cooperative - and most communities had some nominal (or real) democratic authority (a *"junta directiva"* / local council / cooperative committee etc) which was the body responsible for deciding on local actions. The status of the literacy circle was not always clear (particularly when it was small) and relations between the circle and the community committees were sometimes important for achieving local action.

This background to *"participation"* and *"action"* is particularly important given the significant impact which the literacy programme did indeed achieve in these respects (see section 4.6).

4.4.4 CROSS-CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

There were clearly differences in the development of the REFLECT methodology in each of the pilot programmes. Since REFLECT was not a *"pre-packaged method"* and since it was applied in such different settings this is unsurprising. It is, in effect, through the creative adaptations of the basic ideas in these pilots that what is now known as REFLECT (and which is consolidated in the *"Mother Manual"*) has evolved.

In Bangladesh and Uganda the methodology was adapted to the local situation with considerable

success and a high degree of understanding of the basic principles. However, it is sometimes from the mistakes that one learns the most and aspects of the El Salvador pilot proved particularly revealing. In some of the literacy circles in Usulutan it became clear how the REFLECT methodology could be distorted with the graphics being regarded as ends in themselves rather than as a means to an end - and with the literacy and numeracy work not being closely interwoven with the graphics. It is important to note that a similar problem arose to some extent in Uganda with the numeracy work which was not well designed in the original manual and which was therefore separated off and became more abstract than would be desirable. This was not a problem in Bangladesh where the numeracy work was a central focus of the pilot.

In contrast to the above, some of the adaptations and innovations of the pilot programmes do not undermine the basic principles of the REFLECT approach. For example, it is not inherently contradictory for the maps and matrices to be constructed on tables (as was done in most circles in El Salvador) instead of on the ground (as was the norm in Uganda and Bangladesh), so long as movable objects are used. Likewise, the materials on which the graphics are drawn (whether large sheets of manila paper as in Bangladesh or harder cardboard as in Uganda) and even the visual quality of the resulting maps and matrices (meticulous and colourful detail in Bangladesh compared to simpler graphics in Uganda and a broad range of styles in El Salvador), though significant differences to an outside eye, are not in themselves key to the methodology. It is the process of constructing these materials and how they are then used which are the essential things to consider.

It is important to note the different rate of progress in the three pilots. In Uganda and El Salvador, most circles had covered just ten Units (though some had done 15). In Bangladesh, which started later (though circles met 6 days a week compared to 2/3 days a week in Uganda and El Salvador) most circles covered 20 Units. This is not in itself a sign of greater achievement. Programme managers in all three pilots were keen to emphasise that no pressure was put on circles to *"get through"* the manual quickly. The key is the process. A single Unit could take two days, two weeks or a month depending on the intensity of discussion that the graphic produced and the amount of literacy and numeracy work that flowed from it.

The observations on the problems encountered within the pilot literacy programmes are a very important introduction to the results of the evaluations. They help the reader to see that these were not *"specially preserved"* or *"uniquely attended"* pilots or models. Each programme was operating in a very specific moment in time with very real problems. Every literacy programme is unique and so we cannot generalise too much from any one programme. But when we compare the three programmes some wider conclusions can be drawn.

4.5 READING, WRITING AND NUMERACY

4.5.1 BANGLADESH

The results of the External Evaluation established that the REFLECT approach was much more successful at teaching literacy and numeracy than the methods used in the control group (using FIVDB materials). REFLECT groups scored 43% better in reading, 79% better in writing, 64% better in numeracy and 150% better in visual literacy.

It was further noted that *"in the control groups performance was better in the upper age group while in the intervention [REFLECT] groups performance was better in the lower age group"*. The 15-19 year olds in the REFLECT circles did exceptionally well - with 62% getting a Grade A for reading, 75% getting Grade A for writing, 100% getting Grade A for numeracy.

The numbers who achieved literacy and numeracy in the REFLECT circles are tabulated below:

Analysing this we can observe the following:

78% of those who initially enrolled are still attending the literacy circle (though some are irregular).

77.5% of those who have stayed on have learnt basic literacy.

60.3% of the total of those enrolled have achieved literacy.

70% of those enrolled achieved literacy if we exclude those women who were forced to permanently drop out for reasons beyond their control (permanent migration owing to marriage or search for work and violent opposition of husbands).

The Bengali alphabet is much more complex than the Roman alphabet having many more simple letters and complex compounds. Nevertheless REFLECT participants learnt rapidly

In the control groups only 47% of those who were tested passed, leaving an overall success rate (given 45% drop out) of just 26%. The REFLECT circles, with an overall success rate of 60%, were more than twice as successful.

Literate habits

The women were asked what they have actually read in the past six months. In the first two communities we asked whether they had read a lot or a little of each but this proved too time consuming and so we restricted the questions to yes or no. Out of 59 women interviewed the results were as follows:

42 = 71% School texts
36 = 61% Pass book *
33 = 56% Health leaflets
31 = 53% Medicines/prescrips.
30 = 51% Cinema Posters
29 = 49% Directions eg buses
29 = 49% Letters

Shomiti number	CU 109	CU 115	JI 193	JI 195	JI 203	JI 209	JI 207	JI 127	JI 201	CU 125	Total
Initial enrolment	15	16	14	15	15	[illegible]	12	15	21	16	154
Permanent drop out	3	4	0	6	4	4	1	7	2	3	34
Achieved literacy	13	12	10	9	7	7	9	5	9	12	93

24 = 41% Signs (eg shops)
23 = 39% Fertiliser instr.
19 = 32% Agricultural / IG leaflets
17 = 29% Legal documents
16 = 27% Religious texts
12 = 20% Newspapers
9 = 15% Minutes of meetings

* a higher percentage was hoped for but it should be noted that the existing Pass Book is badly designed, including many compound letters and small text. If it is re-designed and made easier then this percentage will probably rise substantially.

The women were also asked what they have actually written in the past six months. Out of 59 women interviewed the results were as follows:

48 = 81% Signature
18 = 30% Personal letters
15 = 25% Pass books
12 = 20% Shopping lists
3 = 5% Other letters
3 = 5% Minutes of meetings

Finally the women were asked what they have actually used written numbers for in the past six months. Out of 59 women interviewed the results were as follows:

15 = 25% Pass book
11 = 18% Household accounts
8 = 14% For buying/selling
3 = 5% Other accounts
1 = 2% Measurements

One of the most positive signs for the medium term is the near universal demand for books which the literacy programme has generated. If this can be responded to successfully with books appropriate for newly literates and if a rickshaw library can be established as planned then the literacy programme will have contributed significantly to the creation of a more literate environment which will benefit the wider community. One additional possibility is the subsidising of a local newspaper set up as a business concern.

4.5.2 UGANDA

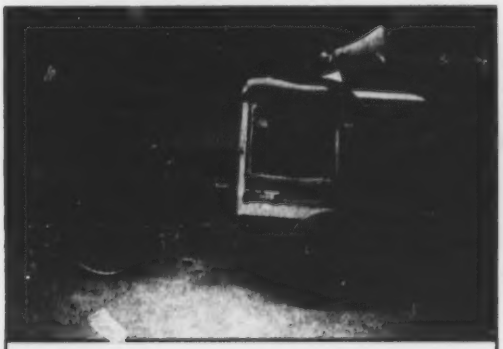
The same basic literacy and numeracy tests, based on a standard design used elsewhere in Uganda, were conducted with learners in both REFLECT groups and control groups. All learners in the sample of 24 REFLECT circles passed the test except for one learner who was regarded as still being pre-literate. The test papers were independently reviewed to verify this. In the control group only 55% of learners passed. The average score of REFLECT learners was 55%, with half the learners scoring over 50%. This compares with an average score of 36% in the Control Groups.

The average REFLECT learner after one year (with a typical attendance of one hundred hours) can:

a) read a paragraph aloud and understand it. She finds difficulty, however, with silent reading.

b) write a letter on a familiar topic eg, letter to ACTIONAID, asking for a loan, of about one paragraph. She writes clearly and with confidence.

c) copy and calculate using the four signs. Four figure numbers are handled well in addition and subtraction, and two figures in multiplication and division.



Bangladesh: Rickshaw with video, TV and generator - a similar system will be used for books.

Uganda: REFLECT circle with graphics on permanent display on the walls.

The average woman obtained a higher score than the average man, though there was a wider spread of ability (women's scores in the REFLECT circles ranged from 10% - 86%, and men's scores from 47% - 88%).

Test results were broken down into skill components:-

i) Reading
This was the weakest area and women performed relatively badly particularly on reading comprehension requiring silent reading of unknown material. Learners have almost no experience of this activity, and many did not attempt the task. However, it was also the last question in the test and there may have been time and tiredness factors at work.

ii) Writing
This was a strong area, and most learners attempted some independent writing, and were not worried about spelling errors etc. They were confident about setting out their answers on a separate sheet of paper and wrote quickly and clearly. This was impressive as they had never done a test before. Only one learner seemed to be in the pre-literate stage.

iii) Numeracy
Learners scored high in this area, and women did better than men. All the questions were based on conventional maths, and even if not answered accurately were set out correctly as a record. Women were more methodical than men in their setting out of the calculations. Their scores were a surprise considering that they had expressed a desire for more time on numeracy and the numeracy work had been criticised for being de-linked from the graphics.

In the learners' self evaluation of progress (PRA activity), 84% were satisfied with their overall progress in reading, writing, numeracy and discussion with a slightly lower figure of 81% satisfied with their progress in numeracy.

Examination of learners' notebooks, the test results and talking to learners and facilitators, led to the conclusion that REFLECT enabled learners to achieve their maximum potential, and there were no constraints such as experienced by learners in the Control Group. The learners are encouraged to experiment with independent writing, and do so.

The main weakness of the methodology is that the course is cumulative, using phonetic languages to build up a repertoire of syllables, but there are no strategies for remedial action when adult learners miss a number of classes. Facilitators have no idea what to do except to give up their time free of charge to irregular (or slow) learners. There is obviously no reason why they should do this as an integral part of their work.

Control groups

The most noticeable characteristic of Control Groups was a lack of self confidence. REFLECT learners took the papers, were happy to work on their own (indeed were anxious that other learners should not copy them!) and were certain that they would do well. In the Control Group, learners had to be persuaded to try, and were always asking for help from the instructor and each other.

"We cannot take the test. We are still in Primary 1" was a typical comment.

This lack of confidence clearly led to the test being done poorly. It showed (with the exception of some individuals with very high scores) that the learners had indeed achieved only the very limited goals set out in the methodology for Basic Literacy. They could have achieved much more in the same period using REFLECT.

Reading of exercise books in Control Groups showed that learners spent most of the time copying, and did not understand what they had written. Reading with comprehension, as opposed to merely reading syllables aloud, was rare in the sample classes. This was compounded by the problem of learners who were not fluent in Luganda which was the only language offered.

Numeracy exercises had in the main no connection with the Picture Chart or the topic, and this seemed to be due to the restriction to single figure calculations. This was recognised by facilitators to be well below learners' capacity for mental arithmetic (used to reading and calculating very large figures in Ugandan shillings), but the only practical numeracy supplied was the explanation of relevant weights and measures eg. weighing coffee on a kilogram scale.

At the end of the course, at best learners could write key words, (often only the key *"generative words"* which the primer had given them). They were not in a meaningful context, and it appeared

that the adult learners were being taught in the same way as a child for whom language and context are both new worlds to explore. The result was low achievement (with just 55% passing and an average score of just 36% in the tests) and little prospect with the Primer methodology of creating a dynamic process linking literacy and action (see section 4.6).

Literate habits & language empowerment

Having chosen to teach in a language that was not previously written there were (at first) apparently no materials for people to use to develop literate habits. A survey of people's habits showed that they were creatively using their skills to read some things (including Bibles, labels, signs, directions, instructions etc) often in other languages (including English). However, it is clear that their main reading activities were in the literacy class itself. This has left learners with very little conception of their future choices of reading materials and presents a serious challenge.

One learner expressed her lack of experience in reading using the following Lubwisi proverb:
"If a child always eats at her own home, she always thinks her mother is the best cook."

If the literacy skills are to be consolidated into literate habits in Bundibugyo, much depends on the creation of a literate environment. There are some positive signs. There are initiatives from the communities themselves: notices of meetings, funerals and other events are being put up in the villages on improvised notice boards; an increase in letter-writing (both personal and for "official purposes"); the preparation of local project proposals and the writing down of oral histories. There is also a *"demand"*. Many learners commented in their interviews that, following the REFLECT circles they wanted to read more, in order to feel *"enlightened"* about the world around, and also to gain access to practical information - even if they were usually unaware of the range of things which they could read.

From *"above"* as it were, ACTIONAID is responding to this by printing some of the local stories written by learners (and other local materials) in a newsletter - as well as translating texts on health, agriculture, politics (eg the new constitution) and law into Lubwisi. There are plans for simple low cost printing (eg silk-screen) facilities to be made available to each literacy class.

Maintaining a momentum and the demand for literacy is critical. This has been helped by an apparent change of people's attitude towards literacy. As one put it, the local definition of literacy is now *"that people are naturally clever but they also need to learn reading and writing"*. The pressure on numbers for the new set of literacy classes is ample evidence that those previously uninterested in literacy are changing. Interviews with Parish Councillors and RC1s revealed that over 50% had a real understanding of the REFLECT process happening in the classes. This made their commitment to support the existing classes, as well as the new ones starting, seem more realistic and genuine.

Most significantly however is the shifting status of the main language used in the literacy programme, Lubwisi. Whereas two years ago it was unwritten and many local people commented that they felt *"ashamed"* to speak it in the markets (or on the few occasions they travelled outside the area), now there is a sense of pride in the language. Not only this, the language itself is gathering a momentum, with the local bank in Bundibugyo town now printing forms and cheque books in the language, government agencies starting to recognise the language and even the Ministry of Education now accepting its use in the first three years of primary school. This is a spectacular turn-around in a short space of time. The process is helped by the present political climate in Uganda which emphasises de-centralisation. It would not be so easy in other contexts. Nevertheless the extent of change in how Lubwisi is identified and used can only increase the prospects of local people creating their own literate environment in their own language, consolidating their literacy skills in the process.

The same level of *"language empowerment"* has not yet taken place with Lukonjo (as there were only a handful of Lukonjo circles) but once the literacy programme extends to more Lukonjo speaking villages it will be interesting to observe the changes. There is certainly a danger that Lubwisi may end up being elevated above other local languages (like Lukonjo) and dialects (like Lwamba) thus disempowering or undermining other local groups. If the original pilot programme had included more Lukonjo speaking villages this danger would have been reduced. The circles which have learnt in Lukonjo have shown that the REFLECT methodology is able to adapt to such a challenge. However the need for follow up resources in printing and publishing in different

languages also needs to be considered. The cost of this would be reduced if the emphasis is placed on creating a literate environment from below through low cost village level printing.

4.5.3 EL SALVADOR

As emphasised in section 4.4.3 the REFLECT approach had been applied in varying degrees across the different literacy circles in El Salvador and in some cases it had really not been implemented sufficiently to serve as the basis for evaluating the impact of the method. The evaluation therefore focussed on the eight literacy circles where the REFLECT methodology had been applied. The table in section 4.4.3 provides details of these circles. This is a small sample and may raise some concerns about the wider validity of the results. However, the detail of the results is sufficiently substantial to counterbalance some of the concerns about the size of the sample.

Analysing this table we can observe that in the literacy circles where the REFLECT method has been applied there has been considerably more success. 75% of those who enrolled are still in the literacy circles and 86% of them have graduated using a standard literacy and numeracy test. The other literacy circles performed less well (only 55% continued to attend to the end and only 46% passed the test).

Different control groups were used to ensure a good range of comparison. Firstly the municipal programme of CIAZO, regarded as their most successful programme at present, which benefits from considerable logistical support from UNICEF and local government. A sample of five communities was taken from this programme (selected as representative) and these results revealed that 49% of those enrolled completed the course (compared to 75% in the REFLECT circles in COMUS). Of those who completed, 90% graduated (which compares to 86% of those using the similar test in COMUS REFLECT circles). In overall terms this means that 43% of those who enrolled successfully completed the course in CIAZO's municipal programme (compared to 65% in the COMUS REFLECT circles). It is worth noting that the facilitators had an average level of 11 grades education in this Control Group (almost twice the average education level of the COMUS facilitators).

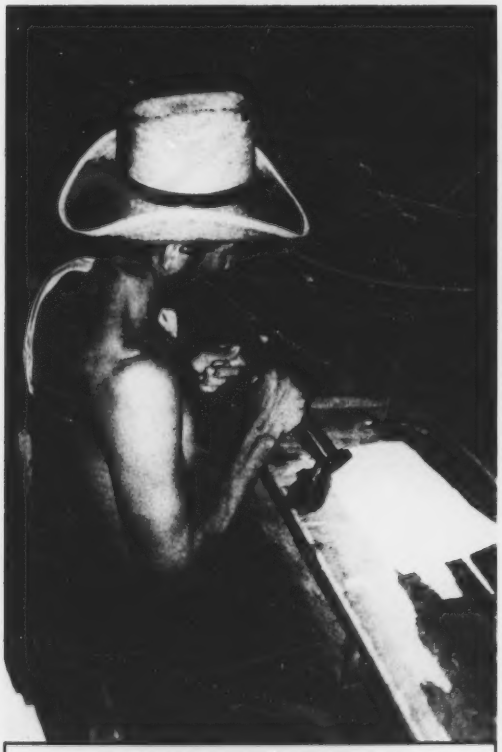
A more representative comparison in relation to the literacy and numeracy tests was taken from the second control group - CIAZO's work with other grassroots organisations. A set of 74 completed tests were selected at random and reviewed to provide comparative results. The results were broken down in detail according to the different tests involved. The results are provided below both for the control group and for the COMUS REFLECT circles:

	Control Group Total*	%	COMUS %	Difference (+ or -)
Dictated words	55	74%	98%	COMUS + 24%
Sentence construction	65	88%	93%	COMUS + 5%
Creative writing	28	38%	84%	COMUS + 44%
Additions	60	81%	86%	COMUS + 5%
Subtraction	62	84%	64%	COMUS - 20%
Problem solving	45	61%	66%	COMUS + 5%
Overall passes	61	82%	86%	COMUS + 4%

* 74 people of whom 39 were women (of these 33 graduated = 85%). There were also no notable gender differences in COMUS circles.

The results here are slightly poorer than for the municipal programme of CIAZO. What is missing here is detail of the percentage of learners who dropped out during the course before coming to graduation, Reports from CIAZO advisers indicate that a drop out of at least 50% is common (which is consistent with the municipal programme). The greatest difference with the COMUS REFLECT programme appears to be a greater ability to retain learners in the circle. Having retained more learners the success rates of those sitting the final test are also (marginally) higher than in CIAZO's normal programme.

It is interesting to observe the details of the above results. In general the COMUS REFLECT circles performed much better in the detail and passed with better results. The COMUS REFLECT circles performed much better in writing - particularly creative writing. There were more difficulties in mathematics. However, the results in numeracy were distorted by a serious failure in one circle, Galingagua. If the results of this circle are separated out then the numeracy scores improve substantially.



REFLECT participant sharpens his pencil with a machete.

Self-evaluation of learning

Objective tests of literacy skills tell only half the story. Learner's own perceptions of their progress, their subjective view, is equally important. Understanding how learners themselves see their progress in relation to their own initial expectations offers some insight into their motivation to continue learning (and whether they would recommend the experience to others). A matrix was constructed in each of 7 REFLECT circles, with 34 learners, where each learner had to indicate their level of satisfaction with different activities in relation to their initial expectations: reading, writing, mathematics and discussion. A similar matrix was constructed with just 7 learners in a control group. The results showed that:

91% of REFLECT learners expressed satisfaction with their reading compared to 42% of Control group learners.

94% of REFLECT learners expressed satisfaction with their writing compared to 71% of Control group learners.

82% of REFLECT learners expressed satisfaction with their numeracy skills compared to 57% of Control group learners.

Literate and numerate habits

In structured interviews with 37 REFLECT learners and 18 control group learners the following emerged:

What things have you actually read (in the past months)?

COMUS		CONTROL
30%	newspapers / newsletters	28%
28%	health leaflets / materials	22%
22%	children's school texts	11%
19%	posters	22%
17%	agriculture leaflets / materials	16%
16%	documents about cooperative	0%
14%	The Bibles	22%
11%	Stories / comics	5%
8%	letters	5%

What things have you actually written (in the past months)

COMUS		CONTROL
24%	signatures	22%
16%	shopping lists	11%
11%	personal letters	11%
11%	messages	0%

On what occasions have you used written numbers?

COMUS		CONTROL
43%	personal accounts / other accounts	22%
27%	buying/selling of products	27%
11%	measurements	0%
8%	credit requests / records	0%
6%	calendar	0%
3%	telephone numbers	0%

In general the REFLECT learners have used their skills slightly more than those in the control groups though there is not a very substantial difference. The clearest differences are in relation to school texts, cooperative documents and the keeping of accounts which REFLECT learners mentioned much more.

In general however the results might be considered disappointing and this could be related to the fact that COMUS had made no systematic attempt to promote or create a more literate environment. There has been no attempt to establish village libraries, to promote the distribution of written materials, to create a newsletter or to liaise with other sectoral staff to ensure a coherent strategy. This is a serious missed opportunity. No literacy programme can be fully effective unless clear attempts are made to back it up with strategies to create a more literate environment. This is not therefore a reflection on the REFLECT methodology but on the way in which it has been implemented in this pilot.

4.5.4 ANALYSIS

Abadzi (1994) in her review of adult literacy programmes over the last thirty years estimated an effectiveness rate of just 12.5%. This figure is arrived at in a rather formulaic way but does resonate with experience for many people working in literacy:

- on average 50% of those who enrol in programmes drop out within a few weeks.
- 50% of those who remain in the literacy programme fail to complete the course or fail to graduate.
- 50% of those who graduate lose their skills through disuse within a year or so.

If these figures are taken as an overall benchmark and we take the Control groups in each country as local or national benchmarks then we can observe that the REFLECT programmes in all three pilots have performed well with a higher percentage staying on in the literacy circles and a higher percentage achieving literacy.

	Retained	Achieved Literacy	% overall
Salvador REFLECT	75%	86%	65%
Salvador Contro	49%	90%	43%
Bangladesh REFLECT	78%	77.5%	60%
Bangladesh Control	55%	47%	26%
Uganda REFLECT	69%	99%	68%
Uganda Control	40%	55%	22%
World Bank	50%	50%	25%

Given the time frame of the evaluations it is too early to be measure the retention of skills after the completion of the REFLECT literacy programme. However, there are positive signs:

- REFLECT learners are generally motivated to continue learning
- most REFLECT learners are starting to use the skills in their daily lives

In general terms in all three pilot programmes the REFLECT learners performed very well in tests of writing, particularly creative writing. This is perhaps

unsurprising given the focus on literacy circles producing their own materials (rather than using pre-printed texts or simply copying out words from a primer).

Reading skills were also better than in the control groups (43% better in Bangladesh) though not so dramatically. This may be an area of concern - reflected perhaps by a rather *"purist"* approach in the pilots. Having rejected primers, personnel in the REFLECT pilots were hesitant to introduce other pre-printed materials and the emphasis was placed very much on learners producing everything for themselves. A balance needs to be sought in which learner generated materials forms the backbone of the course but supplementary reading materials are also supplied (particularly for home reading). Numeracy skills were the weakest area in Uganda and El Salvador though in Bangladesh the REFLECT learners significantly out-performed the control group. This reflects the fact that numeracy was scarcely addressed in the manuals for the first two pilots (Uganda and El Salvador) but became a dominant focus in Bangladesh in the context of the savings and credit programme.

Many of the ideas concerning the use of the REFLECT approach for numeracy were only developed in Bangladesh so hopefully the positive results there are a sign of the future potential of the approach.

4.6 EMPOWERMENT

"Empowerment" is a difficult term to define and is becoming more elusive the more widely that it is used. Rappaport (1986) comments that *"Empowerment is like obscenity; you have trouble defining it but you know it when you see it"*. In essence it is something to do with giving people control over their own lives - whether in the social sphere, the political sphere or the economic sphere. Shetty (1991) identifies a number of features that can be ascribed to an empowerment approach. It is *"a dynamic and ongoing process"*, requiring an *"holistic approach"*, but which is *"context specific ... defined only within the local social, cultural, economic, political and historical context"*. Moreover it is focussed on *"marginalised groups"*, *"implies redistribution of power"*, is *"democratising"* but is also *"very much dependent on the perception that marginalised people have of themselves"*. Lastly, an empowerment approach should *"build self-reliance"* and be *"sustainable"*.

In the three areas where the REFLECT pilots were developed, the nature of existing power structures and people's relations to them are certainly different. The process of empowerment cannot be conceived similarly by (predominantly male) campesinos in the politicised communities of post-civil war El Salvador as by the women in Bhola Island who rarely, if ever, leave their homestead. The objectives of the REFLECT programmes were different according to these contexts and the means of defining and evaluating empowerment were thus different. Nevertheless we have attempted to integrate the analysis of empowerment across the three pilot programmes under the following headings:

Self Realisation
Community Participation
Collective Action
Resource Management
Gender Roles
Health
Children's Education

It is not possible here to present the full results from each of the pilot programmes though the full evaluations of each are available on request (from ACTIONAID, Hamlyn House, Archway, London N19 5PG).

REFLECT participants from Bangladesh articulate their enthusiasm for the approach.

4.6.1 SELF REALISATION

This section focuses on the impact of the three literacy programmes on the learners' and facilitators' sense of self realisation which is conceived as including individual skills, knowledge and attitudes which will positively affect their self perception and the perception that others have of them.

Learners

"Self-confidence" is sometimes regarded as a problematic concept. Although there may be outward manifestations which we would regard as signs of self-confidence, it is ultimately not something that we can judge from outside but rather something that depends on self-perception. It is closely related to a sense of dignity and self-respect.

Personnel in all three pilot programmes felt that there was a very positive increase in the self confidence of learners, manifested through increased levels of participation in discussions. In Bangladesh for example, women who at first were shy to engage with anyone from outside their community (and would hide their faces, pull down veils etc), were, after a few months, confidently putting themselves forward. When any external visitor now comes and asks what they are doing

the normal response is to proudly display and explain the maps and matrices they have constructed. The level of eloquence and enthusiasm amongst the women is striking. Almost all of them participate actively in the discussions, all trying to get a word in. Most notably the facilitator is usually the quietest person in the circle. Often one has to ask who the facilitator is, as the learners completely take over all explanations and discussions. In contrast, in the control groups women were observed as more withdrawn and the facilitator tended to leap in to answer every question put by an outsider, seeming to fear that the learners might get it wrong.

However it is the women's own judgment that is of paramount importance. In self-evaluations, 72% of learners in Uganda said that they now felt more self-confident, and 76% of learners in Bangladesh said the REFLECT process had been very helpful in generating self confidence. In El Salvador 100% of COMUS REFLECT learners said it helped a lot in generating self-confidence (compared to 42% of learners in the control group).

For self-confidence to lead to self-realisation other skills will certainly be needed. Amongst these, problem solving skills might be regarded as vital. In El Salvador 87% of learners, compared to just 14% in the control group (and 66% of REFLECT learners in Uganda and 54% in Bangladesh) felt that the process had been very useful in helping them develop these skills. The comparison with the Control Group is important here in establishing that the learners are not just giving the answers that we want to hear. In Uganda the evaluation team observed of the Control Groups:

"the methodology did not stimulate entrepreneurial abilities, and tended to hand out information rather than develop problem-solving capacity. One instructor said: 'I really poured everything out....' which made his title of instructor all too accurate."

In contrast one woman learner in a REFLECT circle commented: *"Literacy has taught me how to identify my problems...and that I can solve only some of them."*

This thoughtful comment summed up the opinion of many learners that the process of map construction, discussion and literacy had given them new insights into the progress of their lives and the problems they faced. These insights encompassed the different social roles they played as domestic, reproductive, productive, and community players.

The Actions Points (described in the following sections) give ample evidence that the learners' statements about problem-solving skills were not empty words, but had already been translated into reality. For example, a seventeen year old with no previous independent income had persuaded his father to divide his land and was enthusiastically implementing new agricultural practices; and a woman whose husband had been unreliable with money was using PRA methods to work out her food accounts for the year - with her husband on the floor of their house. Similar practical applications were found in Bangladesh where, for example, 76% of women learners said that the circle had strengthened their negotiating skills with travelling salesmen (who had previously taken advantage of them).

Women now deal more confidently with travelling salesmen as they understand the systems of weights and measures and they can calculate more effectively.

Knowledge of the local environment must also be considered of crucial importance in facilitating self-realisation. The REFLECT process emphasises the systematisation of existing knowledge and the exchange of experiences between participants rather than the transfer of facts or pre-packaged *"knowledge"*. Nevertheless most participants felt that the process had indeed increased their knowledge in various respects. All 32 of the COMUS REFLECT learners questioned on this point said the process had helped a lot or enormously in enabling them to acquire new knowledge (eg agriculture, natural resources, health issues) compared to 52% in the control group sample. In Uganda, 82% said that they had improved their knowledge of agriculture and 74% had learnt significant new things about protecting their health.

In Bangladesh in a general test on life skills (relating to local health issues, record keeping for

credit, survival skills in emergencies and knowledge for income generation) the REFLECT groups performed 68% better than the control groups. The 15-19 year olds did particularly well in REFLECT circles with 87% getting Grade A for life skills. The self evaluation of learners corroborated this with 85% of women saying they had acquired important knowledge relating to savings and credit and 66% saying they gained significantly in understanding new forms of income generation.

Constructing the graphics aroused the interest of the whole community and earned women the respect of most men.

Relationships with others in the community is another factor to consider in determining the potential for self-realisation, particularly in a close-knit village community. In El Salvador 84 % of COMUS REFLECT learners said the process had helped a lot or enormously in improving their relations with others outside the circle (compared to 52% in control group). In Bangladesh (in a sample of 59 women) 83% said that the REFLECT circle had contributed to significantly improving their relations with husbands and other male members of their households. However, only 49% said that it had helped improve relations with the wider community. It is interesting here to note a couple of the negative comments. In one shomiti women said that relations with the wider community had deteriorated in the short term because men in the community were very critical of them for learning. In another the fundamentalist mullahs had vigorously opposed the circle saying *"Beware! If you join the circle you'll become Christians"*. The women say they answered: *"so long as we are allowed to learn we don't care what we become."*

In Uganda many moving testimonies were given to the impact of learning literacy in the REFLECT circles. *"Now I can sit at table with my in-laws"* declared one male learner testifying to the lack of respect with which he had been treated as a non-literate. This is clearly one important aspect of self realisation and is derived from the general view of non literates as inferior, and not full members of the community. Learners spoke of signing their name in front of a group, where before they had put their thumb print, and the enormous pleasure they felt at that moment.

"I have what I wanted. I can now die" is how one older woman learner expressed this feeling.

"Let me sing, dance and rejoice. I would have died without holding a pen." sang a woman learner who had been previously unhappy that her husband and co-wife were literate, whilst she was unable to read or write at all.

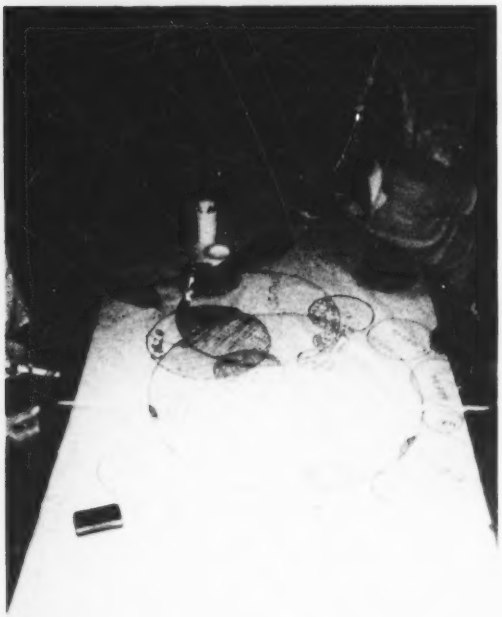
One of the elements which has been most fundamental in all three pilot projects has been the *"atmosphere"* of the literacy circles. The REFLECT circles do not feel like dry or boring formal places of learning. Rather they are relaxed and full of laughter. In Bangladesh 96% of women said that they enjoyed the circles very much and everyone who has visited a circle will bear testament to the truth of this. The evaluators in Uganda were struck by the enthusiasm and joy of the REFLECT learners in contrast with the control group: *"It seemed that the REFLECT methodology felt easy to learners, while the Picture Chart [Primer] methodology was perceived as difficult, and comparable to being in Primary School 1. Learners in the Control group made very few "Literacy has opened my eyes" style of comments, when compared to the overwhelming enthusiasm of REFLECT learners. This seemed to emphasis the point that only unusually bright and creative learners and instructors could do well with the Picture Chart [Primer] methodology, but that the majority of learners could cope with REFLECT."*

Enjoyment must not be under-rated. It is crucial to maintaining the motivation of learners to attend and it is when people are enjoying themselves that learning comes easily. If REFLECT can create a learning environment where people are relaxed and unthreatened enough to enjoy themselves, then this is a solid foundation for self realisation.

Facilitators

Many analyses of literacy programmes focus exclusively on the learners and ignore the teachers

or facilitators. In the three REFLECT pilots it was felt important to also evaluate the impact of the programmes on facilitators as they were all local to the villages where they taught. The development of the facilitators as a resource was thus a contribution to community development.



The personal development of the facilitators was particularly noticable in El Salvador.

In interviews with facilitators in **El Salvador** it was striking to note that one of the main impacts that they noted was that the process has helped them improve their own literacy and numeracy skills. This is consistent with the observation in section 4.4.3 that many had reached only sixth grade in their own primary education and some had reached only third grade. All the facilitators felt that the process has helped them to develop skills for motivating other people and for analysing problems. Their self confidence was often very low prior to teaching and has improved. The following personal changes in their lives were also noted:

- 80% said that they are now more actively involved in community organisations;

- 47% now hold significant new positions of responsibility in their community, other than being the facilitator, (eg being president or vice president of the community committee);

- 33% said that they are now planting different crops;

- 53% said that they have actively worked on soil conservation;

Personal testimonies of the facilitators are also revealing. In Los Rios, the facilitator Efrain said *"I now feel a part of my community and I am respected by others"*. In Las Conchas the facilitator commented: *"Now I know how to access information which can help to reduce the isolation of my community"*.

In **Uganda** the rôle of the facilitators was vital. By taking up each Action Point themselves, they acted as role models for their class. Most facilitators had an informal leadership role with their learners, and increasingly with the wider community, as they are asked for advice by older people. Their raised status was indicated by happy comments about being greeted on the pathways, being brought a chair to sit upon etc. Several facilitators commented that this new respect was reducing their dependence on alcohol, and that it would be quite embarrassing to be found drunk when people thought well of them.

In addition, the fortnightly exchange and training groups have developed a spirit of co-operation and challenge. One facilitator may boast of home hygiene improvements, but another will ask why he has not yet built a kitchen.

The importance of their community role is highlighted by the fact that at least half the facilitators have been chosen for leadership roles in education, the church and so on. Many are planning to stand for election to RC1 when the time comes.

The table overleaf shows steps up or down that facilitators felt they had taken since starting their work. They ranged from Very Weak to average and very good, and the activity was carried out with each Parish Training Group.

Clearly the greatest area of progress was directly concerned with their work (facilitation skills), closely followed by agricultural skills and problem solving; the latter being generally taken to mean economic problems. However all these issues were priorities for personal growth and self realisation.

In **Bangladesh** the facilitators also emphasised that the process of learning to teach with the REFLECT method had led to a positive impact on

PARISH	GENDER ATTITUDE	AGRIC SKILL	PROBLEM SOLVING	MOTIVATE LEARNERS	SELF CONF.	FACIL SKILL	HEALTH PRACTICE
HAKITARA	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.5	0.9	2.0	0.6
BUSORU	0.5	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.6	1.2	1.0
B'RANGYA	1.9	1.2	1.3	2.0	1.8	2.2	1.1
B'KWANGA	1.1	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.1
TOTAL	4.4	5.2	5.2	5.7	4.7	7.0	3.8

their own lives. For example they had gained self confidence; they had gained significant knowledge of their community and of local issues; they had developed a strong sense of commitment to their community and were involved in other affairs (particularly in relation to health work and children's education); their skills of analysis had much improved (maps and matrices were useful tools); they were now more involved in local discussions (often sharing the maps and matrices with others in the village, particularly the elders); and there was some impact on their own families as they were now able to advise husbands, fathers or brothers about profitable activities and the best time to invest in different things.

4.6.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Although the analysis of self-realisation was revealing in the three pilot studies there was clearly a need to determine a more concrete impact. One key challenge was to see whether this self-realisation had produced a concrete impact on the learners' actual participation in community organisations. This was perhaps ambitious given the short time frame but it was felt to be worth exploring to see if any tendencies were emerging. A longer term evaluation of these programmes would be additionally revealing to determine the sustainability of these tendencies.

EL SALVADOR

In El Salvador, where one of the major objectives of the programme was to strengthen community organisations, this became a central focus. Community organisations in Usulutan included for example: village councils, cooperatives, school PTAs, church groups, sports groups, women's groups, credit committees and health committees. A sample was taken of 36 learners from 7 literacy circles where the REFLECT method had been effectively applied. They were asked detailed questions about their participation in different organisations before and after the REFLECT circle. The results were as follows:

- 80% of learners said that they were now members (or attended meetings) of community organisations which they were not before the REFLECT literacy programme.

- 77% of learners said that they were now actively involved in decision making in those organisations which they did not feel they were before the REFLECT literacy programme.

- 61% of learners said that they had now acquired formal positions of responsibility in those organisations which they did not hold before the REFLECT literacy programme (and in general those who had done so had assumed more than one position).

These results are corroborated by local leaders (representatives from the community councils - *"junta directivas"*) 18 of whom were interviewed. More than 70% said that the literacy circles had significantly increased levels of participation in community organisations or cooperatives) and 50% said that the circles had helped to *"renew the leadership"* of these organisations.

Interviews with three sectoral coordinators of COMUS (in the health, production and organisation sectors) further emphasise this impact. All of them said that the REFLECT circles had significantly helped them in promoting their work (people who

Community elections used to be held by hand vote.

had been learners were now more organised and more active - and their literacy skills were of practical value).

Another observable change has been that now the elections for community councils and committees are held mostly by secret ballot (rather than by a hand vote at a meeting which was the norm before and which had various limitations, not least peer pressure from existing leaders for people to re-elect them). This has helped to democratise the community organisations and would not have been feasible prior to the literacy programme.

Now elections are held by secret ballot and 60% of REFLECT learners have assumed new positions of responsibility in community organisation.

These results are striking, even more so when compared with the Control Group (the wider CIAZO literacy programme) where CIAZO's own trainers and advisers say there is rarely any significant impact on participation in other community affairs. Only one control group actually constructed this matrix - and there were no changes in community participation at all.

The reasons for this impact were discussed extensively by the evaluation team and various factors were considered to have been important. The new self confidence of the learners is clearly one factor as is the new respect that they receive from other people in the community. The level of detailed analysis of local problems which they undertook in the REFLECT circles must also have played a part in prompting them to become more active. Last but by no means least, the learners now have the basic literacy and numeracy skills which they require in order to assume formal positions.

In becoming more active in local affairs and assuming these new positions the learners will, in most cases, be required to use their literacy and numeracy skills in real situations (perhaps not on a daily basis, but certainly regularly and on an ongoing basis). This will help the learners to (see the value of, and) consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills - which is likely to mean that few will loose their skills through disuse. It will be interesting to document this is the medium term.

This close and dramatic inter-relationship between literacy and participation is perhaps one of the strongest arguments for the REFLECT approach.

As a final note on community participation it is important to consider the role of the facilitators. The REFLECT facilitators have been particularly active in the democratisation of COMUS itself. COMUS is planning to make itself accountable to the communities where it works by having community representatives sit on a *"board of trustees"* which will review the strategic direction of COMUS and approve plans and budgets. The literacy facilitators were the main activists in establishing meetings to set this process in motion. Interestingly this began to cause some tension within the present leadership of COMUS who initiated the democratisation process thinking that they knew who would be on the board (the traditional local leaders) but who have now found that communities are electing a new generation of leaders (either the literacy facilitators or the learners themselves). This has caused some unease as the COMUS leadership no longer feels fully in control of the process they initiated. There have even been accusations that the COMUS education promoters are organising a coup against the COMUS leadership.

UGANDA

In contrast to El Salvador very few learners have taken on formal positions of responsibility in community organisations. This may be because there is not the same culture of *"organisation"* as there is in the politicised communities of Usulutan. It may also be a question of time. The evaluation took place after just one year and there were no Resistance Council elections during that period.

However, the quality of community participation has been reported to have improved considerably. RCs have reported better attendance at village meetings, and a greater willingness to take part in development activities suggested by themselves. There is also a larger pool of people able to take on secretary's duties because they can sign their name on a cheque. Members of different village groups now see the importance of keeping records, minutes etc (which were rarely kept properly before). Over time, this must lead to increased accountability and transparency as everyone can check whether records are being properly kept.

One area of definite impact on developing new community leaders has been with the Parish Councils (established with two elected women from each village who are responsible for a budget devolved from ACTIONAID). Many of the women elected on to these councils were not literate and thus attended REFLECT circles. They are now able to manage money, record decisions and analyse local problems much more systematically than before.The REFLECT circles have also helped to ensure that these Councillors are accountable to the communities who elected them, consulting with the literacy circles and explaining (and having to defend) their decisions. In the future these practices should be widespread in all groups which will increase the democratisation of the communities. There is every likelihood that women who are parish councillors (and others from the literacy circles) will in future look to use their skills within the RC structure which has previously been very male dominated.

The significance of these changes in Bundibugyo should not be under-estimated. Previous to the period of the project it was very unusual for a woman to speak out before a mixed group of women and men. They were locked in a *"culture of silence"*; forbidden by tradition to express themselves. Now women speak freely in many group settings in church or the village meeting.The starting point has been the discussions in the literacy circles. Several women commented to the evaluation team that they are now able to organise their thoughts and prepare notes for what they wish to say in meetings - a practice in which they take great pride.

Again it is important to consider the facilitators themselves. Both formally and informally, they have already taken leadership roles (religious, school management committee etc.), and many express political ambitions for the next RC elections. Indications so far of their commitment to the welfare of the whole community show that their increased role will improve the quality of community life still more.

BANGLADESH

In the context of Bhola Island it is unrealistic to expect the women in REFLECT circles to have assumed active roles in community organisations. Other than their own shomitis, women are completely excluded from all existing organisations whether formal or informal. This will not change overnight. However, the seeds of change in the longer term have been planted with the REFLECT process. The increased confidence and active participation of women within the circles opens up new possibilities. The impact on resource management (section 4.6.4) is analysed later in this report and there are clear indications that women's position within existing structures is shifting as a result of the REFLECT process. In the short term the realistic focus is on greater involvement in household level decisions (rather than community decisions) and there is significant evidence of that shift taking place as outlined in the section on gender roles (section 4.6.5).

4.6.3 COLLECTIVE ACTION

As well as studying participation in community organisations the evaluators in Uganda and El Salvador were keen to know whether the discussion and analysis of local problems within the literacy circles had directly led to concrete actions to contribute to local development (even in the limited timeframe of the pilot projects).

EL SALVADOR

In order to ensure that the actions identified by participants were organically linked to the

REFLECT circle (rather than being the product of other community development initiatives) the evaluators took the different Units from the manual as the starting point. Learners were asked to explain the maps and matrices they produced, identifying what problems they had discussed, the solutions they had found and whether they had agreed concrete actions. Where they had identified actions the evaluators asked whether the actions had been carried out, what they were and who had participated. Four communities were taken as a detailed sample: La Pita, Quesera, Las Conchas and Joya de Pilar. This information is consolidated below:

	action agreed	action done	Number of participants circle	Others
household map	3	3	17	47
nat resource map	6	5	12	0
human resource map	2	1	5	0
agricultural map	3	2	13	53
land tenancy map	1	1	7	0
rainfall calendar	1	1	6	0
agricultural cal.	4	3	15	5
TOTAL:	20	16	75	105

Some Units generated more than one action. The actions actually undertaken included: repairing local roads, constructing grain stores, tree and medicinal plant nurseries, organic fertilisers, terracing and other soil conservation methods, planting of fruit trees etc. Most of the actions did not require external help.

Many actions have also been initiated by the other circles, for example:

- Basic grain stores constructed in Los Rios, Jobalitos y Loma Pacha.

Ovilio, the literacy promoter standing in a garden of medicinal plants and herbs.

- **Literacy shelters constructed in Galingagua, La Pena y Los Rios.**
- Furniture for literacy circle made by learners in Jobalito, La Brena, La Pita, Las Conchas.
- Repairing of roads in El Carmen
- Specific training courses organised by learners on production issues in El Carmen, la Pena, La Pita, Galingagua.
- Specific training on health issues organised by learners in Jobalito, la Pena, Zungano, Los Rios.
- Local mobilisation for drinking water in Cerro Verde, El Zungano y El Carmen.
- Medicinal plant nurseries in La Pena and El Zungano.
- Soil conservation group established and active in El Carmen.
- Vegetable demonstration plot in Los Rios.
- Organic fertiliser project in El Zungano.
- Social events organised by learners in Joya de Pilar, La Pita, Los Rios, El Coroz, Cerro Verde, Las Conchas.
- Local campaign for increasing school enrolment (leading for example to 6 children in Galingagua attending school for first time).

The same type of table could not be constructed with control groups (structured around graphics). However, eighteen learners interviewed from control groups were asked whether there were any local actions generated by their literacy circles and only two responded positively, mentioning only *"clean up of rubbish"*. CIAZO advisers commented that this kind of mobilisation is very rare in their other literacy circles - the discussion in their circles simply does not reach a point where local actions are considered let alone undertaken.

This level of mobilisation may in part relate to the work of other COMUS personnel promoting sectoral development programmes in the communities though it is significant that the table above involved learners relating the origin of actions to specific maps or calendars they had constructed. Although the presence of a wider development programme may have facilitated local

REFLECT participants in the circle in Los Rios.

actions it is certainly a two way process and COMUS personnel themselves pay testimony to the receptiveness and enthusiasm of literacy learners in contrast to other members of the community.

Most actions noted above have not involved other community members and have tended to be on a fairly small scale. The reasons given for this normally related to either a lack of financial resources for larger actions or problems in coordination with the community councils. Existing community leaders were not always active in supporting the literacy circles. Although two-thirds of leaders said they had visited the literacy circles in their community, most had only visited once or twice and there was not a close or regular contact. Proposals for local actions discussed within literacy circles were not often taken on by the people who could give them a *"status"* or authority and thereby mobilise people behind them. Addressing this in future could lead to an even more significant impact (eg if regular monthly meetings between learners and community leaders were instigated - or if learners were more prepared to present their ideas to community assemblies). It is interesting to speculate that maybe the frustration felt by some learners with the local leaders was a factor in pushing them to stand for elected positions themselves.

UGANDA

"We are the wahanuli" (the expert discussers)

The table below consolidates information collected in Uganda in a similar way to El Salvador. It represents information from the sample of 20 REFLECT circles showing what percentage of circles had undertaken a local development action as a result of each Unit and giving examples of those actions.

All the groups in the sample had undertaken at least one joint action (in addition to numerous individual initiatives), most commonly starting a tree nursery, organising meetings on family planning or starting a school for younger children. Most groups have undertaken three or more actions. The fact that each Unit has generated so much local change may explain the fact that some circles have covered just ten units in one year (and may indeed be the basis for recommending that facilitators go slowly with units).

Some REFLECT circles have played a leading role in mobilising the whole community around a village project. This has always been in cases where the Resistance Council has been very much in sympathy with the literacy class; (especially where

UNIT	TITLE	UNIT DONE	ACTION PLAN	ACTION DONE	ACTION SUCCESS	COMMENTS
1	Natural Resources	100%	100%	88%	83%	Tree planting
2	Human Resources	96%	96%	75%	75%	Agricultural work
3	Household Map	100%	100%	71%	67%	Family planning & Attitudes (polygamy)
4	Mobility Map	79%	67%	67%	67%	Children's educ. Re-grading roads
5	Ideal Futures Map	100%	100%	75%	58%	Infrastructure
6	Rainfall Calendar	100%	100%	92%	92%	Terracing
7&8	Agric. & Gender	100%	100%	100%	96%	Gender roles & Crop Spacing/Timing
9	Hungry Season	88%	88%	83%	83%	Crop diversity and stores.

1. Participants construct a household map on the ground.

the facilitator is on the RC1). Such village projects have included digging ditches for the laying of water pipes (in conjunction with the NGO, World Harvest); re-grading of roads; starting a small market to attract trade; planting trees; building a health unit, and building a primary school.

The most overwhelming evidence of the growth in capacity for united action has been in the plethora of activities which learners have started in small groups. These include income-generating activities such as pig rearing, rabbit rearing and growing chillis for sale, as well as working together in agriculture. In the latter area, for example, women in some literacy groups have formed labour teams so that they rotate around members' shambas for greater efficiency. This can help with tasks such as weeding and harvesting.

As well as economic activities, there have been social changes which have depended on collective agreement. For example, in many circles learners made joint decisions not to distribute too much of their harvest to relatives and friends; a practice respected by tradition, but one which contributes to the length of the Hungry Season. This is clearly not a change which an individual could make, because they would face damaging criticism.

The REFLECT process seems to fit very easily with the forums for decision making already existing, and with *"traditional"* ways of pooling knowledge and expertise in Bundibugyo. For whatever reason, these traditional forms seem to have lost their key role in helping the community (particularly the youth) to adapt to current challenges and problems. REFLECT has proved successful as a channel of communication between different types of people and between generations. The view of learners was that they were learning from each

2. The map is completed with considerable detail included. There has been an extensive discussion of local population growth.

other, and also reactivating useful knowledge within themselves. Thus they could solve many problems independently of external help, and in a sustainable way.

3. The map has been transferred onto paper and literacy work will now be developed. One output is a letter to request training on family planning - to which the women will invite their husbands.

Learners themselves emphasised that all these complex processes were brought together through the medium of literacy. Drawing maps and calendars, and writing about the same subject crystallised decisions made and provided a permanent record of shared information. This systematised knowledge was the essential factor for collective action; it is accessible and understood by all.

All of the collective actions outlined above could be classified as internal empowerment within the literacy class, because to a large extent they do not involve loss of power or privilege by any other group. Learners have certainly not reached the stage where their increased income or organising power is a perceivable threat to the better off. The question of external empowerment in relation to those social and economic forces within the Ugandan context that help create and enforce poverty, remains for future evaluations to determine. It was observed, however, that learners were trying to demand their rights as citizens by making requests for services from central government representatives; thus strengthening the process of democracy even when not meeting with much response. This has applied to Health, Forestry, and Water Departments. The negative side of this is that frustration may result, and learners become depressed about the possibility of fundamental change taking place.

In the Ugandan Control Group there were also some examples of local actions mentioned by learners covering agricultural work (spacing of banana trees, mulching of the ground) and health (home hygiene measures, child growth monitoring, balanced diets). However, these actions were also being promoted by other ACTIONAID initiatives locally (training programmes / extension workers etc) and it was difficult to determine how directly they were linked to the literacy programme. It appeared to the evaluation team (which included the coordinator of the Control Group literacy programme) that there was not an organic link and that the actions were more likely the result of other well planned, appropriate ACTIONAID inputs. ACTIONAID has been working in Mityana for eight years and has many other programmes (whereas in Bundibugyo the REFLECT circles were the entry point activity).

The learners in the control groups did not seem to have developed tools for generating independent actions. This was emphasised by the practice of making home visits to *"check up"* on the learners. Had they done what they had been told in class? Again this was a contrast to the REFLECT circles where the learners decided on the actions and were thus self-motivated.

BANGLADESH

As with the issue of community participation, the objectives of the literacy programme in Bangladesh were not to empower women for taking community level actions. Nevertheless there was one striking example of a shomiti (Centre JI203) where the women collected together to build a new tube well. They did not link this decision to a specific Unit but to the general level of awareness that they had developed through a number of discussions in their centre (see health section).

The women wrote to ACTIONAID requesting a tube well and had to raise 1,000 Taka between them to contribute to the cost of digging it. In Bhola such a well takes 3 days and nights of continual digging and involves going 900 feet down (to reach below the salt water). When the evaluators visited the Centre the tube well was on its second day of construction and there was a great feeling of imminent achievement.

Drilling a tube well in Bangladesh. Though water is everywhere, accessing clean water for drinking is extremely difficult.

4.6.4 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Although community level action was a focus for El Salvador and (to some extent) Uganda, it was also important to consider actions taken at the household level to improve the management of local resources. This covered both immediate economic livelihoods and the natural resources (or environment) upon which people depend. This section aims to bring together some of the evidence from the three evaluations which deal with the impact of the REFLECT circles on improving local resource management.

BANGLADESH

There were limitations to the potential impact of the REFLECT centres in the economic sphere in Bangladesh as all learners were women and most were not in a decision-making role in relation to the core income or activities of their households. However, some changes were identified by the evaluation team which indicate progress in a positive direction.

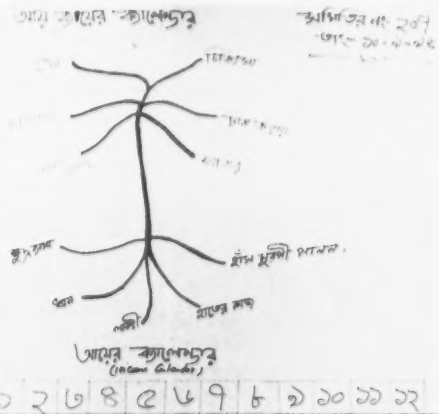
The construction of natural resource maps of their villages, indicating sources of water and wood, led some women to identify and address economic problems relating to drought. Fish cultivation in ponds is an important income generating activity for some women but during droughts ponds exposed to the sun often dry up completely and the fish die. To help prevent this in future the women have planted more trees around their ponds. Moreover in one circle the construction of the map prompted women to start fish cultivation. One woman commented: *"when we did the map and we had drawn our ponds some of the women put a fish in their ponds and I wanted to put a fish in mine but I don't have any so I couldn't. Straight away I decided that I would."* In this centre four women reported that they had started fish cultivation in their ponds after the discussion of this map.

The agricultural map involved women identifying land use in their village. This produced discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of different crops, sometimes drawing on the opinion of men from outside the circle. In some cases this prompted women to see the need to change or diversify the crops they were growing and some persuaded their families to start to plant new crops such as jute, chili and vegetables.

The Food Availability Calendar was intended to identify major foodstuffs consumed and their relative availability through the year. It was said to be useful by many women for helping them to plan for shortages - which they can now anticipate more clearly. Their response has been to collectively agree to save more money in the shomiti at times when they have extra funds - so that they can draw on them at times of need.

The Income and Expenditure Calendar started with the drawing of a tree showing different sources of income as roots and different types of expenditure as branches. Each was then broken down into detail and analysed for variations through the year. Again this was said to have been helpful in making the women more aware of future needs and the importance of planning ahead. *"Now we are able to anticipate problems"* specified one woman in JI193. In all Centres the discussion of this calendar revealed that expenditure is much higher than income. Two main solutions were identified in JI195: diversifying income and reducing family size. All learners in this circle are young women and reported a strong change in attitude, particularly to family size. Several women in the Centre said they had discussed this with their husbands with some success.

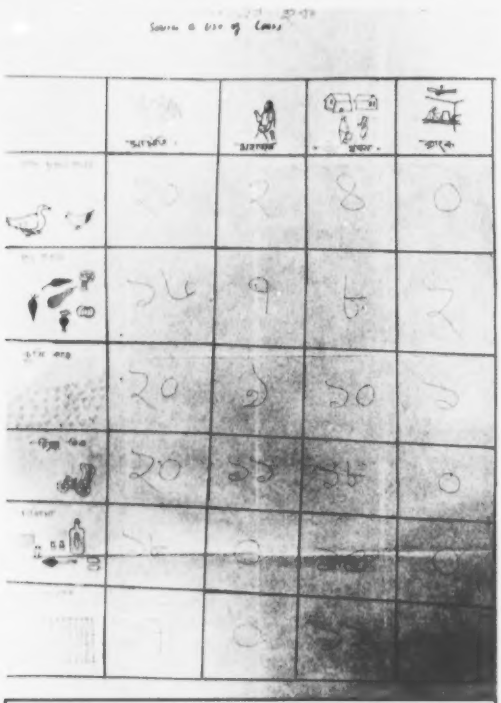
The Basic Commodities calendar analysed major commodities purchased and the typical trends in their prices through a year. It produced a strong response in several Centres. A woman in CU109 commented: *"Before we just suffered when prices changed but now we think in advance. When the rice price is low, if we have money or can take a loan we buy rice and store it for when the price is*



Income and expenditure tree. In most cases the tree would fall over - having weak roots & heavy branches.

higher". This sentiment was echoed in CU115 where women said that they now plan much better and buy raw materials for their mat-making in bulk quantities when the prices are low. A similar approach to bulk buying of cheap goods like oil, ginger and pulses (which was reported as a new phenomenon which had not occurred to them before) was mentioned in other circles. In JI193 one woman commented: *"Before we had no organised way of doing this - we knew prices changed but before we were victims of the changes and we did not really think about what we could do until we discussed it openly"*.

The calendar seems to have helped women begin a shift from being re-active to being pro-active. Perhaps the fact that women do not go to the market is significant here. They are less able to compare prices normally and thus easily become victims of travelling salesmen (hawkers) who can convince them that their prices are fair when they are not. It is significant that 76% of women interviewed said that the literacy centre had been very helpful in enabling them to negotiate more effectively with hawkers. Their level of knowledge of prices and price trends has undoubtedly increased.



Matrix on the sources and uses of loans, SOURCES = Shomiti, moneylender, friends/relatives, bank. USES = hens/ducks, vegetable growing, crops, rickshaw, medicines, mat-making.

A matrix showing sources and uses of credit was clearly very relevant to the women in Bhola. Discussion tended to focus on the advantages and disadvantages of different sources. For example disadvantages identified by JI195 included: moneylenders charge high interest, banks are inaccessible, relatives have no money and the shomiti only gives small loans. A common conclusion seemed to be that mentioned by women in JI193: that they would avoid taking money from local money-lenders if at all possible and would only do so in an emergency and after exhausting other alternatives.

Discussing this matrix women in JI207 said that they used their first shomiti loans just for daily expenses and did not think of investing them for profitable activities. Now they are much more aware and this has led to concrete change in their use of shomiti loans. For example, with their last loans one woman bought rice when it was cheap and stored it, another bought coconuts when they were cheap to make oil, another helped her husband establish a small tea stall and another invested in poultry. Before joining the literacy class these four women reported that they had never used their loans productively.

The Preference Matrix on the use of Loans had a similar effect as the Credit matrix in JI207. The learners reported that until doing this matrix most of them had just spent loans to reinforce daily spending - to have extra cash in hard times - rather than investing in specific activities. Since then they are specifically investing each loan in productive activities. Three women used their last loan for investing in seeds and pesticides, one for salt production, one for poultry, one for contributing to buying a cow and one woman put funds towards a rickshaw for her husband. All the women in the centre reported a 100% change in their attitude towards and usage of shomiti loans. The following Unit on Projections on Loan Use helped to consolidate some of this. A woman in VU109 commented: *"It helped us decide what times of the year were best for taking out loans for different activities"*

Through the process of constructing these different maps, calendars and matrices the women seem to have developed considerable skills in utilising local resources, particularly through diversifying sources of income and advance planning. As a result, women now appear to be more involved in decisions on the use of the loans they receive through the shomiti. Previously many had simply

given the money to their husbands or fathers and had little or no say in how the money was used. As one woman in JI203 commented: *"Now our husbands actively ask our opinion when we give them the money and most of the time they respect what we suggest."*

The same woman also added: *"Most of our loans are now used profitably but we need larger loans if we are to make a real difference."*

In JI209 the women commented that although they are doing the same range of activities as before they are now doing them better. There are not many new alternatives but at least now they can decide when is a good time of year to start mat making and when it is good for fish cultivation. *"We make fewer mistakes and have more success"*.

The increased ability to manage their own savings and credit books should contribute to making this change sustainable. Over 61% of the women said they had read their pass books and many women were now keeping their own household accounts. Their literacy skills also gave them access to information. More than one third said that they had read agricultural leaflets / posters and 39% had read fertiliser instructions.

Owing to a lack of time no substantial research was done with the control groups to determine whether there had been any impact in the area of resource management. However, the evidence available and comments from local staff suggested a negligible outcome. Although the primer lessons attempted to address certain themes relating to resource management there were rarely any detailed discussions in the control groups. This limited the scope for linking the learning of literacy to any wider changes.

UGANDA

The sense that it was possible to manage resources of the primary environment whether in the home or in the shamba (farming land), came over very strongly from the learners in Bundibugyo. A number of personal and community actions were generated through the discussions which have contributed to improved resource management - and most required no technical assistance or funding from outside.

The natural resource map, for example, led to discussions on high population density and the impact that this is having on diminishing natural resources. Most circles identified local deforestation as a serious problem, resulting from the cutting of trees for fuel (which, though necessary, has led to soil erosion). In order replenish the resource almost all groups decided to start nursery beds for young trees, grown from local seedlings. Some groups planted trees strategically for fuel whilst others focused more on planting to prevent soil erosion on an individual basis. In Bundibuturo II for example, 300 trees were planted by learners, and 300 more planted by others in the village. When some of the young trees started dying in the intense heat, requests were made for technical support to the Forestry Department - who were less than cooperative, requesting larger payments to offer advice, which led to some frustration.

The Human Resources Map produced some interesting initiatives which could enhance the local economy. For example learners talked about diversifying crops, introducing soya beans and starting up small livestock projects, rearing goats, pigs and chickens - both on an individual basis and in groups, particularly small groups of women.

More than any other Unit the Household by Household Map led to discussions focused on population growth. Having plotted all the

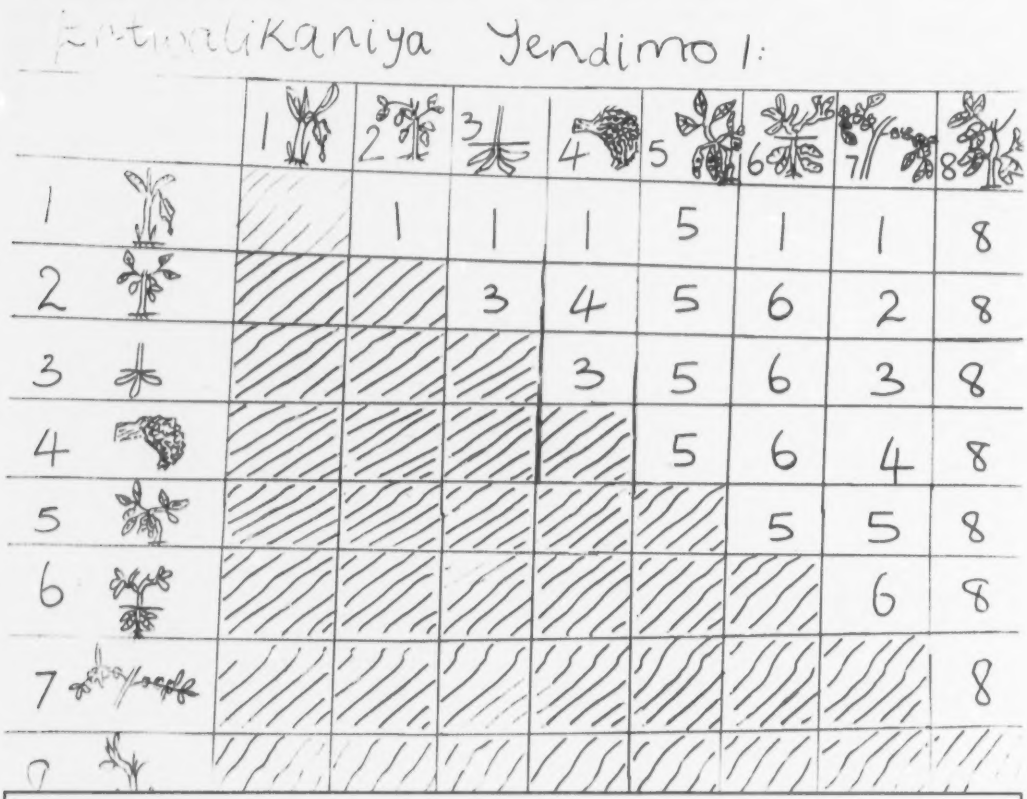
Household map. Each REFLECT circle developed it's own style - compare with the map on page 61.

households in the village, learners identified the number of men, women, boys and girls in each compound. Attention was focussed on the problems of dividing up the available land between grown up children. Learners were alarmed about the dangers of fragmentation and landlessness in the future. This produced a demand for family planning. Female learners in many cases called community meetings (to ensure their husbands were also there) and invited personnel from the Family Planning Clinic in Bundibugyo to facilitate discussions and explain the options available. More remote communities had greater difficulty in inviting external facilitators and in subsequently accessing services but some held discussions with local men anyway as a first step. However, the lack of local knowledge was sometimes striking. In a graduation ceremony in one village a role play was performed which showed *"separate beds"* as the only way to prevent pregnancy!

An additional, related issue, which arose in constructing this map was polygamy which, though not widespread is also not uncommon in the area. The disadvantages of one man living with several wives and all their children in one place, emerged strongly in most discussions. It puts pressure on land, and there may be a stimulus to having more children in the rivalry between co-wives. The attitudinal change produced by some of these discussions could be significant.

The agricultural units (eg Rainfall Calendar, Agricultural Calendar, Crop Preference Matrix, Hungry Season Calendar) had a cumulative effect on improving local resource management. Learners repeatedly testified to changing their agricultural practices, such as:

- changing their planting times (in response to local climate change);
- spacing their crops more carefully (rather than random scattering of seeds);
- planting thick bands of grass on slopes to prevent erosion;
- planting productive trees such as avocado;
- changing the crops they grow to solve their food security problem with year-round crops such as yams, cassava and soya beans (in preference to cash crops like rice);



Crop preference ranking. Each crop is compared with each other crop. When a preference is agreed reasons are given and these 'reasons' are then used for literacy practice.

- building stores and granaries eg 18 out of 20 learners of Bugarama Class improvised with old drums and pots (rather than spending money on construction);
- changing traditional practices which undermine food security such as the donating of excess produce at harvest time to friends and relatives (which many circles agreed no longer benefitted the community but merely increased hunger later in the year.

All the outcomes described above were as a result of pooling knowledge and did not require any external funding or technical input. These outcomes are outward indications of what appeared to be an initial recognition by learners of the importance of what might be called *"Primary Environmental Care"*.

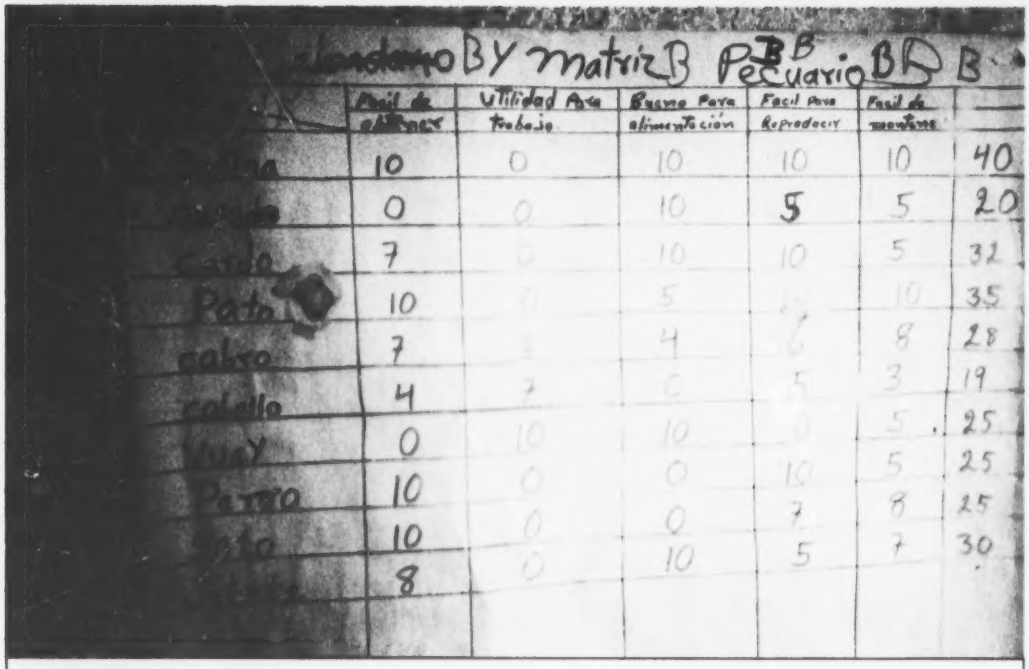
EL SALVADOR

There was also considerable evidence in El Salvador that the REFLECT process had impacted on the learners' personal lives and their individual behaviour. Where it proved difficult to organise in order to resolve problems as a group, the focused discussions in the circles produced practical changes on an individual level. Over 40% of learners said that the experience of learning in the circle had led to concrete changes in their personal work. The changes that they mentioned in relation to agriculture included:

- not burning the land (which can reduce fertility and lead to soil erosion on slopes);
- planting new crops (eg tomato, chile, radish, sesame seed);
- the use of new seed varieties and better local selection of seeds from the harvest;
- better storage of crops (so that they can be sold for a better price);
- the use of better planting methods (more careful spacing of crops for optimum productivity);
- the use of organic fertilisers and pesticides;
- the analysis of local soils to determine their suitability for different crops and the most appropriate fertilisers;
- small scale tree planting for protection of soils and fruit production;
- the construction of bunds on hill-sides to conserve soils.

These changes are particularly significant when

EL SALVADOR: Calendar of agricultural activities by crop. The exchange of experience and knowledge was particularly important as many participants had little previous experience of planting for themselves - having worked in the past as day labourers on cash crop plantations.



	Facil de alimentar	Utilidad para trabajo	Bueno para alimentación	Facil para Reproducir	Facil de mantener	
	10	0	10	10	10	40
	0	0	10	5	5	20
	7	0	10	10	5	32
	10	0	5	7	10	35
	7	3	4	6	8	28
	4	2	0	5	3	19
	0	10	10	0	5	25
	10	0	0	10	5	25
	10	0	0	7	8	25
	8	0	10	5	7	30

Matrix of farm animals - ranking them by availability, value for work, value as food, ease to keep/maintain.

one considers that historically many of the learners were landless labourers who had occupied abandoned land during the war. At that time many had cut down coffee to grow maize and beans - which had produced serious problems with soil erosion. Learning how to farm land for themselves was, for some, a new experience. Many found that the best way to learn was from each other - in a structured and locally focused debate.

Many learners also commented on the value of knowledge they had acquired of the recent peace agreements relating to land reform. It is interesting to note that the percentage of settlements of land disputes in the COMUS area by May 1995 was around 70%, much higher than the national average (30%). This is something which is closely related to the wider work of COMUS though the discussions in the literacy circles certainly played a role in reinforcing that work. By helping to increase local people's access to land, and helping them to focus on how best to make that land productive, the REFLECT circles have had a huge impact on the local economy and future resource management.

Specific testimonies help to illustrate this. For example, Elias in E! Zungano commented: *"In the past I knew something about soil conservation methods but I had never actually done anything. Now I do because we have discussed it and all recognise the importance. Now I can think in the long term rather than just think about the next harvest."*

Lydia, the facilitator in Joya de Pilar said: *"I am now using the calendars I taught in the literacy circle to plan the income and costs of my family. I have shared most of the discussions we had with my family and so now we are planting many new crops and the signs are good."*

Juan Rodriguez the facilitator in La Pita clarified how these changes were linked to the REFLECT approach: *"I am very concerned to protect the value of the land and nature's resources. This motivates me in the literacy class as I am able to address important themes with a group of people from the community. People need a space to be able to address the issues and come to their own judgments. We have to break the old patronal relations. It is not easy but it must be worth trying. These are the reasons why education is important and why just reading and writing is not enough. With this method we can start with local analysis and come up with our own recommendations for action. There also clear reasons for writing words as they help to define or describe or label the graphics."*

4.6.5 GENDER ROLES

BANGLADESH

One of the objectives of the Bangladesh REFLECT programme was to increase women's status. However, by being exclusively focused on women there was a concern that the impact on gender roles might be limited - as men might not be brought on board. The resistance of some men to women's attendance has already been noted and there was a danger that men's attitudes might also undermine some of the outcomes hoped for from the process.

Participants in REFLECT circle JI195

However, in practice the maps and matrices produced in the circles by women helped to open up some discussion with husbands and fathers. For example, in JI195 women reported both discussing them in advance with husbands and fathers (to get useful information to include on them) and then sharing the results. As a result the men saw the value of their work. This was particularly important in this Centre as three women had been forced to permanently drop out owing to pressure from their husbands. The other women were able to keep going by being transparent and involving local men, convincing them that the literacy centre could be of benefit to everyone. In several circles the husbands of learners were reported to be very impressed with the maps and matrices, regarding them as a resource for the village, contributing to learning and even reportedly influencing local decisions by men.

This involvement of men in the wider process meant that the REFLECT circles were able to contribute to wider change. In the section on Resource Management the increasing role of women in decisions on loan use has already been noted. This was put very realistically by one woman from JI193: ***"now we are more involved in decisions than before. Before we just took a loan and gave the money to our husbands. Our husbands still take the money but now they ask us what we think because they know that we have learnt things and may have some useful ideas."***

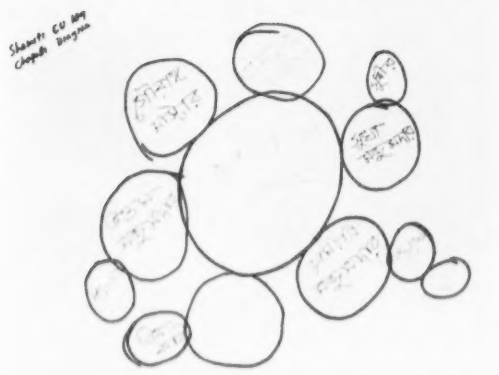
This was echoed by another women who said that now they can participate in decisions because: *"now we have knowledge and opinions which we lacked before."*

For women whose lives were largely restricted to their homestead, the maps and matrices offered insight into a wider world. The evaluators were surprised that even something as simple as a household map was regarded in some cases as being of real practical value. Sharing information on where everyone lived and how to get there was of genuine use to some women who had previously not been to some parts of their own village. It prompted many to visit other learners in their homes and to gain more confidence to visit relatives. One woman commented: *"We are more confident to go out of the homestead now and even out of the village to visit relatives or if we need to go to the doctor. But we still avoid the market place and don't go to the cinema."*

Only in one centre (JI203) did women say that their mobility had increased to the extent of going to the market place. This was said to be still rare but until recently it had been unthinkable - and even disallowed by their husbands or fathers. The change was put down in part to the changing views of men who have seen their progress in the REFLECT Centre and have grown to respect women more. One woman added: *"The only problem now is we spend so long in the literacy circles that we have no time to go out."*

In one circle (JI209) the discussion of the household map went much further: *"we talked a lot about the size of our families which is not something we talked about before [taboo] and now we are clear that we want small families - just two children each because we have no land for them"*. It is yet to be seen if the women succeed in controlling the size of their families but they were very confident and outspoken about it to the evaluators.

More direct attempts to address gender roles were sometimes less successful. For example the Gender Workload Calendar was designed to look at different activities done by women and by men



Chapati diagram on informal social structures produced by Shomiti CU109. All public *'power'* is in the hands of men in Bhola.

and the relative workload for each activity in each month. It was designed as a starting point for analysing gender roles. However, it rarely achieved this. Although often laid out in great detail (JI203 identified 24 activities) there was little evidence of broad discussion. Often it was said that both men and women work very hard and if pushed the women said that it was both unnecessary and unfeasible to change any of the roles. There were a couple of exceptions such as in JI195 where women in the Centre reported that they discussed the calendar with their husbands and fathers and that they specifically asked for help at times when they were attending classes. Some of their husbands are now helping with cooking so the women can attend classes.

UGANDA

The impact of the REFLECT methodology on gender roles in society was far reaching in Bundibugyo in a very short time. The evaluators identified four main causes. One was the specific analysis of gender workloads (eg in the calendar), another was the attitude of the facilitators towards women learners, thirdly (and most important) was the process of self realisation which has been especially revolutionary for women learners and lastly was a wider development programme by ACTIONAID in Bundibugyo which revealed a high level of gender awareness.

The conclusion of female and male learners from the Gender Workload Calendar was that a responsible husband should take on some of the tasks, previously assigned to his wives, because women have too much to do. As well as doing extensive domestic labour, women also plant, weed, scare birds and harvest crops (whereas men only clear land and cut down trees). The result of very open discussion in the circles was that many men have started assisting wives in collecting water and fuel, and sometimes in weeding, house mudding, sweeping and cleaning. Several male facilitators claimed to be bathing their young children. Surprisingly, these remarkable changes appeared to emerge from consensus rather than confrontation. Men accepted that women were working harder and acknowledged that more equitable sharing of workloads would make the family unit as a whole more productive and efficient.

The evaluators were keen to determine whether there were other changes that would meet strategic gender needs of women. Two key aspects were selected: household decision-making, and intra-household distribution of income.

Women learners reported a greater willingness amongst men to talk about how money was spent. In one case, a woman reported it as an improvement that her husband had told her openly that he had spent all their coffee money on alcohol, and seemed regretful. Previously she would have had to find this out for herself. Learners attributed improved communications between husband and wife to lessons learned in literacy class about taking control of their lives and planning for the future, whether this was how to increase the family income or how to control family size. Women showed more confidence in their opinions, and men showed more respect for their abilities. Of course, this was especially true when wives and husbands were studying together in the same class.

Other women learners told how they were entering the part of the household compound reserved for all-male decision making. They were joining these family meetings and speaking out about how money should be spent, which children should go to school, which crops to plant and when, whether to add buildings to the compound and so on. It was reported that the experience of speaking before men (especially older men) in the literacy class had helped women lose their fear of doing this, at the same time as making it more socially acceptable.

Discussion in the REFLECT circles in Uganda had a significant impact on gender roles.

As far as distribution of household income was concerned, a significant number of female learners reported that increased confidence combined with numeracy skills was an excellent formula for demanding the full fruits of their labour. Coffee, for example, is commonly grown and tended by different wives, but taken to market and sold by the husband as the owner of the trees. Learners said that previously the husband had decided his share of the money, as well as the share for each wife, as he saw fit; according to whim. Now women learners were calculating their exact share based on the known price, and were very determined in demanding their rights.

The evaluation team looked for the negative aspect of these changes taking place so quickly, but found (through cross checking with different groups) no general resentment from men. This might be because in most cases, men had agreed to help with work or to discuss with their wives willingly, rather than as a result of conflict. Only two men were observed to be resentful. One old man watching a class with his wives within, complained that now they would be able to read his secret letters. Another male leader had forced his first wife out of the house because she had become too vocal within the family.

One significant factor which may have contributed to these changes taking place non-conflictively is the role of the predominantly male facilitators. Many facilitators took a lead in sharing work with their wives, and in trying to space their children. They thus acted as valuable role models for all the men in their community, by not being afraid to step outside convention, or of being laughed at by other men as *"unmanly"*.

The Ugandan Control Group, in Mityana, offered a contrast to the REFLECT process in Bundibugyo. These seemed to be almost no evidence of any impact on gender roles. Indeed the evaluators observed:

"Actions taken in the area of gender relations seemed on further probing to consist of the women being "better" wives , and finding even cleverer strategies for coping with their husbands' unhelpful or abusive behaviour. There was no discussion of a system which was unfair on women, so in contrast to Bundibugyo, more compromise by women was recommended rather than by men".

EL SALVADOR

The team from CIAZO, COMUS and ACTIONAID who developed REFLECT in El Salvador was exclusively male. When the possibility of designing units to address gender issues was raised, the representatives of COMUS and CIAZO both reacted negatively, emphasising that their concern was with community development, with organising and uniting communities, not dividing them. These attitudes appear to be rooted in perceptions of past gender based work in the area as having been confrontational. Despite extensive discussions these views prevailed and gender awareness was both not integrated into Units in the REFLECT manual (and in some respects was actively resisted) and not evident in the implementation of the programme. Most facilitators were male and the promotional campaign in the communities made no specific attempt to reach women (with the consequence that most learners were men). There was no gender dimension in the training programme or in the monitoring. In such a context it can not be surprising that the impact on gender roles in El Salvador was almost non existent.

The original design of the evaluation methodology had included the collection of gender disaggregated statistics. Although this was done for the literacy and numeracy results (where no significant differences were observed, with women achieving equally with men) this was not done for the statistics relating to empowerment. The remarkable outcomes from the Salvadorean programme in relation to community participation and action were therefore not broken down by gender. This was finally acknowledged as a serious limitation by the evaluation team but it was too late to collect new data.

Only one notable observation was made during the

evaluation regarding the participation of women. In the few literacy circles where facilitators were female the learners were predominantly female but where facilitators were male so were most of the learners. Where a male facilitator dropped out and was replaced by a women there was a tendency for male learners to drop out. This correlation emphasises the urgency of increasing gender awareness in the future.

A final note on gender

The example of El Salvador is significant in that it suggests that there is nothing inherent in the REFLECT methodology which will yield the outcomes and impact on gender roles seen in Uganda and Bangladesh. It all depends on how the methodology is interpreted and applied. In a context where the planning and implementing team is gender aware the methodology offers considerable scope for addressing gender issues and initiating a process of change. But where this initial interest in gender issues is absent (or, as in El Salvador, is actively resisted) the outcomes may be very different.

The REFLECT process, by ensuring a curriculum which is relevant to the local area (without focusing just on male themes) and by giving everyone, including women, space to participate (and find a voice for themselves: something of which women in many parts of the world are deprived) in a non-threatening environment is likely to facilitate a process of self-realisation of women which will impact on gender roles.

Women in Bangladesh have benefited from a women-only space to develop these skills whereas in Uganda the women learners have benefited from the experience of speaking in front of men in mixed groups. A learner driven literacy process which builds self esteem is likely to be of particular use to women whose self esteem is typically low or undermined.

4.6.6 HEALTH

Of the three REFLECT programmes the only one to address health issues in detail was Bangladesh. Units were designed to explore health issues in Uganda and El Salvador but most circles had not reached those Units by the time of the evaluation. This was in part a result of the fact that the manuals were designed not knowing how long each Unit would take to cover - and progress through the Units was slower than expected. As has been seen, this was not a problem for the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills as each Unit led to more detailed work than was anticipated. However, it did mean that certain themes were not addressed within the initial literacy phase. In future, manuals might be better designed with fewer Units covering a full range of themes.

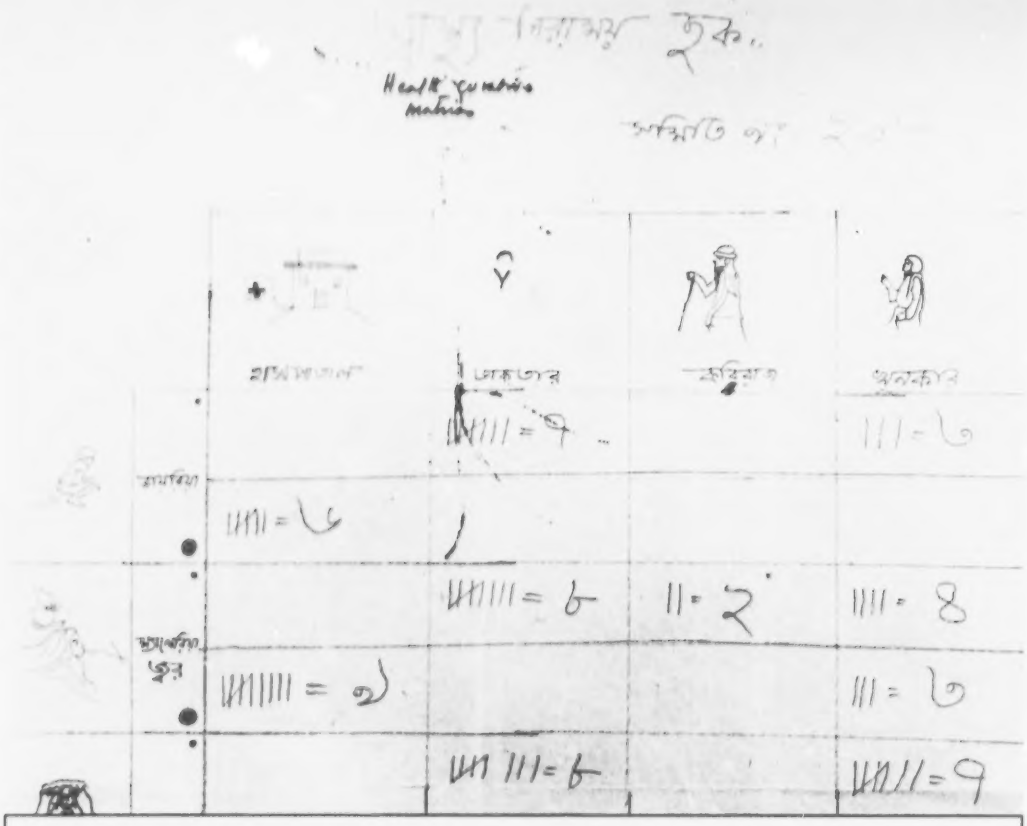
BANGLADESH

A review of comments made by learners on Units relevant to health is the most revealing way of understanding the outcomes and impact of the REFLECT circles on health.

The Natural Resource Map led to many discussions about the use of different water sources in their immediate environment. Where tubewells are available they are generally used for drinking water but many women still wash themselves and their dishes and clothes in ponds. Women in three circles commented that they have now changed their habits and use tube well water for all human uses and pond water only for animals. The clearing of stagnant ponds was also an issue that regularly came up. Some had requested training and advice on how to clear such ponds but often the women felt powerless to improve the condition of the ponds because they were owned by other people.

Health calendars were constructed by all circles, usually identifying a range of between six and ten different local illnesses, monitoring their relative occurrence at different times of the year. This led to discussions about why the illnesses occur at different rates through the year and how they could be prevented. Several groups then constructed a related matrix to look at the causes of the major illnesses.

The Curative Matrix constructed by most circles analysed a range of between 6 and 12 illnesses, considering both mild and severe cases of each. Women had plotted what they would do in each case (go to a doctor, go to a hospital, get medicines, take herbal cures, pray etc), producing a very detailed exchange of knowledge and opinions. One woman in JI209 declared: *"we have shared our experiences and now we have knowledge which will serve us for the rest of our lives."* These women regarded the completed matrix as a set of guidelines on what they should



Section from a curative health matrix showing how participants respond when they have a mild or severe form of different illnesses (diarrhea, malaria etc.) - do they go to the health centre, a doctor / pharmacy, a traditional healer or do

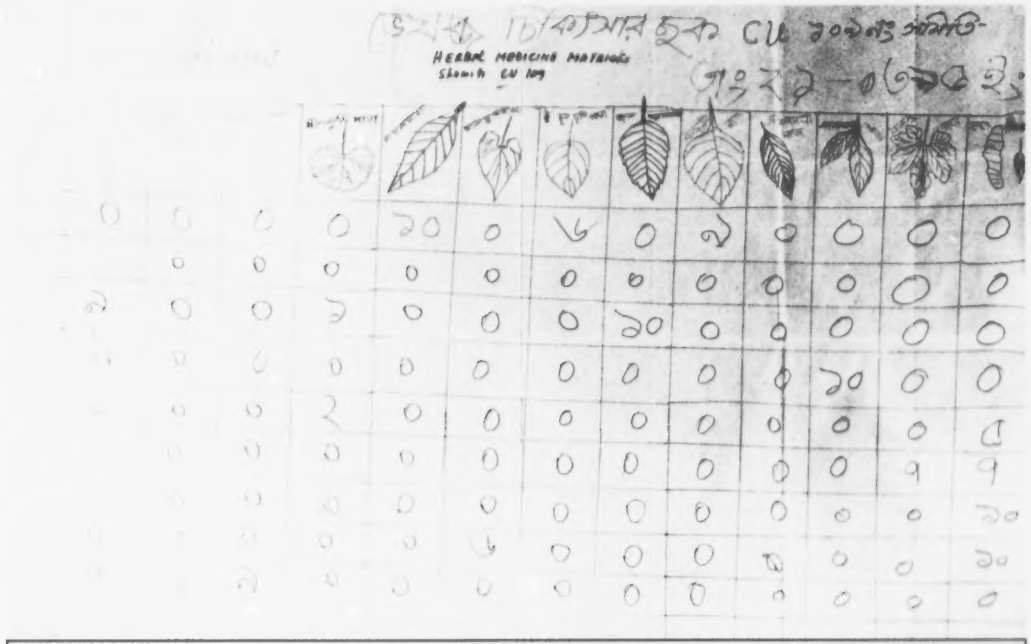
do in the case of different illnesses - and the recommendations in each case are very wise.

A Herbal Medicine Matrix (see overleaf) was also constructed, involving women collecting leaves from all the local herbs they use for curing different illnesses, drawing them and then identifying which herbs were useful for which illness. In some cases this discussion would include details of how to prepare each herb and in what quantities to use it. In several centres women commented that previously each woman in the group knew a little but by sharing their knowledge they had all learnt something new. It was said in CU109 to have revitalised interest in herbal remedies for mild cases of different illnesses (as previously they had been losing faith in traditional or home remedies and were becoming dependent on modern medicines which they often could not afford). In two centres (JI209 and JI203) the women discussed with their parents and grandparents before they constructed the matrix: *"so that we collected the knowledge of our forefathers and shared it. We have all learnt a lot which will be very useful"*

Having discussed health issues through calendars and matrices, the literacy centres then constructed a health and hygiene map which aimed to consolidate what they had discussed into a review of their own village. In general the maps included details of contaminated / stagnant / clean ponds, tube wells, open and closed latrines, rubbish heaps, location of key medicinal plants, houses of health promot traditional healers etc.

In CUD109 the women placed all the latrines in the village on the map and specifically identified one which was badly placed and was contaminating a collective water source. As a result they put pressure on the person involved (not a shomiti member) and helped them to build a water-sealed latrine. They commented triumphantly: *"There are no more open latrines in our village."*

In some villages it proved more difficult to resolve



Matrix of medicinal herbs and plants. Pictures of different herbs brought in by participants and an analysis of their use for a range of common illnesses. This systematising of knowledge was of practical value for many women. The matrix generates a lot of vocabulary for literacy work and many opportunities for numeracy.

problems, particularly where open latrines or contaminated ponds were owned by powerful landowners or other people in the community with whom their relations were not strong. However, in JI195 the women identified many open latrines and proceeded to show their map to husbands, fathers and other women, discussing the problems. At first the response from other was that most could not afford to pay out the 250 taka needed to buy a for a sealed latrine from ACTIONAID. The women therefore contacted ACTIONAID and arranged for people to pay in instalments. As a result nine women in the community are now building sealed latrines.

In Centre JI207 mapping focused the women's attention on the problem of accumulated rubbish from the nearby market and as a result of their discussions they now routinely organise to bury it.

A further Unit in the Bhola manual involved discussion of immunisation based around the vaccination cards which most women already had at home for their children. Only one Centre (JI195) had reached this Unit (most were just about to do it at the time of the evaluation). Women in this centre reported that a few children in the village were not vaccinated before - mainly because their mothers did not trust vaccinations. They said that after discussing immunisation in the REFLECT centre they then talked to the women concerned and some have already gone to get their children immunised.

It is important also to consider the impact of increased literacy on health. Looking back at the statistics on literate habits some positive signs can be seen with 56% of women having said that they had read health leaflets or posters and 53% saying that they had read instructions on medicines or prescriptions (though one woman complained that she could not read her prescription because it had been written in an illegible scrawl by the doctor).

The accumulated effect of these different Units appears to have been very considerable. It has already been noted that one circle mobilised to build a tube well following their discussions. The 59 women interviewed by the evaluators identified knowledge of health issues as one of the most valuable things they had gained from the literacy circle. A total of 75% said that their Centre had been very helpful for acquiring new knowledge of health matters (and 19% said it had been of some help).

Often the women compared the literacy centre to previous training they had received on health

issues through the Shomiti Member Training. In JI193 one woman said: *"We went to Shomiti member training on health but did not learn much. It didn't seem very relevant to us and we used to get confused. Making our own maps and calendars we learnt a lot more and it seems a lot more important."*

Similarly a woman in JI195 said: *"We learnt something of health in the shomiti before but it was not very practical and felt like a lot of rules. With making the maps it was a lot more helpful and we understand these things a lot better."*

UGANDA

Although most literacy circles did not reach the health Units in the Uganda pilot, some literacy circles in Bundibugyo decided to bring forward Units on health when there was a serious outbreak of cholera and dysentery in the area. This was an extremely positive example of learners taking control of their own curriculum and showed the advantages of a flexible approach.

The circles that decided to cover health units reported very positive action points emerging from their discussions. These mainly concerned the prevention of diarrhoea, cholera and the new (fatal) strain of dysentery. Most learners decided to change the management of the latrine and the kitchen in the home. For example, they separated the kitchen from the living area and they dug latrine pits, covered them, and worked on training children to use the latrines. There was an emphasis on washing before cooking, and after using the latrine. No technical assistance from external sources had been needed.

EL SALVADOR

Although the literacy circles did not reach the stage of the manual when they would explicitly address health issues, some outcomes on health were noted from other discussions. The human resource maps often identified a wide range of people with knowledge and skills in the health field. These included health promoters, traditional healers, people knowledgeable about herbs and many *"health masseurs"* (sobadoras). Discussions about the relative skills and value of these people were often very lively with learners exchanging anecdotes and opinions. The natural resource maps also brought up issues surrounding medicinal plants and herbs, helping to focus attention on the increasing difficulties that people had in finding certain plants. In three communities herbs gardens were established with the support of COMUS's wider Natural Medicine programme.

4.6.7 CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

There is a serious shortage of research on the inter-relationship between adult literacy and children's education (see, for example, Barton 1994). Since Jomtien many governments have invested in primary education and have not invested equally in adult literacy. Since it is parents who have to pay for their children's education (even when it is supposedly free there are indirect costs, and increasingly there are also direct costs) the attitude of parents to education must be important. Parents are also key to creating a literate home environment (and wider community) to reinforce learning in school - and the involvement of parents in school committees is increasingly seen as a key to improving the quality and local accountability of primary schools.

The lack of research on the impact of adult literacy programmes on children's education is thus both surprising and worrying. The evaluation of the REFLECT pilots was seen as an opportunity to contribute to this debate - particularly in Uganda where parents are expected to pay many of the direct costs of their children's education.

UGANDA

In Bundibugyo the formal education sector has been poorly resourced by central government (even in comparison to other parts of Uganda) and there is some resistance to schools by local people who dislike the fact that their children are taught in Rutoro. The REFLECT programme was the first adult literacy programme in Bundibugyo of any significant scale and the evaluators were therefore keen to determine the impact it had on attitudes to children's education.

In practice the evaluators found that there had been a significant impact. Not only had attitudes to education significantly changed, but parents, within the space of one year were taking practical steps to educate their children. This was seen by significant changes in three respects:

- an increase in enrolment of children in government primary schools,

- increased attendance at other pre-existing schools, and

- the establishment of new non formal education centres.

1. Government Primary Schools

The table below shows the changes in enrolment in government schools fed by families where some of the adult members are REFLECT learners. The five schools near REFLECT classes have been compared with fourteen schools in the same sub-county with no local REFLECT literacy groups. It reveals a 22% increase in enrolment in schools within the catchment area of REFLECT circles compared to just a 4% increase in schools with no REFLECT circles but with a similar catchment area in other respects.

Comparison of the Increase in Enrolment in Government Primary Schools by REFLECT, and those not Fed by REFLECT.

REFLECT SCHOOLS (5)	Boys	Girls	Total
1994	675	350	1025
1995	830	419	1249
Rate of Increase %	23	20	22

OTHER SCHOOLS (14)	Boys	Girls	Total
1994	2810	1670	4480
1995	2883	1763	4646
Rate of Increase %	2	5	4

No factors were identified to account for the difference between these schools other than the presence of the REFLECT circles.The rate of increase summarised on this table was uniform from Primary I to Primary VII, (although the numbers enrolled are much greater in Primary I - IV) and this was true for all schools, not just the REFLECT five. Despite the very positive influence on increasing overall enrolment, it should be noted that there was not a specifically positive effect on the enrolment of more girls (whose enrolment increased more or less in the same proportion as boys).

2. Other Pre-existing Schools

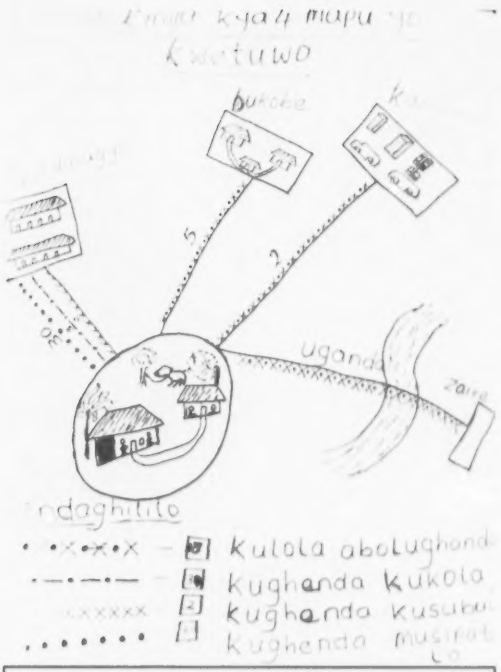
Faced with inadequate government provision some communities have established primary schools for themselves, without Ministry of Education recognition (though this was often being sought). These schools received a fresh impetus from the REFLECT programme with parents sending their children in large numbers. Cases where participation has increased dramatically were Budikuliya: 256 - 360; Mutogo: 103 - 260, and Hakitara: 35 - 120. There appeared to be a particular increase in girls' attendance at these schools. The REFLECT facilitators had often become active as leaders on the Management Committees of these schools (and in some cases of the government schools).

3 New Nursery Schools / Non-Formal Education Centres.

Another development was the starting of new NFE Centres (or *"nursery schools"* as they were called locally) for younger children using the REFLECT literacy shelter, the same blackboard and some of the same teaching materials. Usually parents paid the REFLECT facilitator to teach their children. Although called Nursery Schools, they contained all younger children up to 9 or 10 who had no previous chance to go to school. Nine classes in the sample of 24 (ie more than one third) had started nursery schools, having as many as 60 or 70 children in each. It was interesting to note that facilitators were trying out REFLECT methods with the children as an alternative to their more dimly remembered primary education model.

The combination of these three outcomes represents a substantial impact, in the short term, on children's education in Bundibugyo. The creation of new schools in one third of sampled communities, in the space of just over one year, is particularly notable.

Although such changes are almost certainly the product of the whole REFLECT process many circles said that the new initiatives emerged specifically from discussions surrounding the construction of mobility maps. These maps involved identifying the different places people went to and the reasons for going (eg for markets, employment, health care, visiting relatives etc). They were designed to promote discussion of isolation which had been identified as a key problem in the initial research by ACTIONAID in Bundibugyo. The discussions which emerged often focussed on the education of children which was felt to be the only real way to lessen the isolation of the area - because children could migrate to work (and be visited by family members) or get their



UGANDA Mobility map - showing different places that people go and the reasons for going. Discussion often focussed on the education of children as a key means to reduce isolation.

education and then come back to take salaried jobs in the area. This would mean communication of the most useful kind with the rest of Uganda. The Bwamba have always experienced people from the Toro ethnic group in positions of responsibility in offices and schools, and in positions of political authority. The REFLECT circles enabled them to address how this could be overcome through investing in the future.

It remains to be seen how sustained the increased enrolment will be and whether it will lead to improvements in achievement. One positive sign is that, although the language of instruction is still officially Rutoro the Ministry of Education are now considering the recognition of Lubwisi in the early years and informally it is already widely accepted. This is likely to make parents feel more positive about school education for their children. Moreover, many REFLECT learners are already taking an active interest eg through participating in parent teachers associations. Their experience of the REFLECT methodology is likely to give them a sense of good teaching practice and they will look very closely at the teacher's behaviour, having the confidence to criticise when they think something is wrong.

BANGLADESH

In Bhola most women identified helping their children as one of the primary motivations to learn literacy. The only Unit directly relevant here was the Education Matrix which led to some discussions though in most cases children were already enrolled in school. In a handful of cases children have been enrolled for the first time in school since the REFLECT circles. However, a better indicator might be greater regularity of attendance at school and this was indicated verbally by many women though it proved too complex to measure statistically.

Interestingly the most common thing which women have actually read since the REFLECT programme is their children's school books (71% of women have done so). Many women commented that they try to help their children who are attending school. Although unable to help children who have reached higher grades they now feel able to help those in the first three grades.

When asked how their husbands felt about their participation in the circle the responses from one community (CU115) were particularly revealing. Their husbands are actively supportive of their wives in the REFLECT Centre because they feel that their wives will then be able to help their children. This was commented as something that was becoming an essential part of the *"role of being a good wife."*

EL SALVADOR

The evaluation of REFLECT in El Salvador did not address the impact on the education of children in any detail. However, in some communities it did emerge as an issue for local organisation, with many learners assuming positions of responsibility on PTAs. In other communities like El Carmen, there is no existing school and the REFLECT circles acted as a focal point for discussion about how to establish one. Although no new schools were actually started up, some steps were taken to put pressure on the local Ministry of Education to increase their coverage. Sadly this failed to solicit a response as the education budget was said to be already over-stretched just to cover existing provision.

4.6.8 CROSS CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF EMPOWERMENT

In each of the three pilot programmes there has been substantial evidence that a process of empowerment is underway. What this means has emerged as different in each of the three programmes though there are certain common currents. In all cases something we have called *"self-realisation"* has served as this basis for change - with learners gaining in self confidence and in the respect that they command from others. Through exchanging experiences in structured discussions about their own immediate environment the learners have acquired new knowledge and skills in problem solving which serve them in their daily lives. Through constructing calendars and matrices they have strengthened their skills in planning and projection - which have contributed to a more effective management of scarce local resources.

In Uganda and El Salvador discussion in the literacy circles has led directly to collective action at a community level and contributed (particularly in El Salvador) to increased participation in (and the democratisation of) community organisations. There are indications of change in respect of gender roles in Bangladesh and Uganda. Where circles have addressed health issues the outcomes have also been impressive. The wider impact on children's education has been particularly notable in Uganda with some positive signs in Bangladesh and El Salvador.

The evaluators in all three countries were surprised at the range of outcomes that could be identified within such a short time frame (a year or eighteen months) from the start of the literacy programmes. Evaluation over a longer time frame might reveal further (or different) evidence of empowerment.

Certainly it is too early to say how sustained some of these outcomes may be. In some cases positive changes may be reversed and people may fall back into old habits (in the same way as people may lose their literacy skills) once the focus of ongoing literacy circles has gone and the momentum of change has slowed. A lack of resources to follow up new ideas might lead to frustration. In other cases, the processes of change that have been initiated might encounter opposition from vested interests and these may obstruct progress. Given all these and other factors, the process of empowerment can only be said to have begun and is still far from being consolidated. Further research is needed over a longer time frame.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the initial indications are positive. The REFLECT circles have achieved outcomes which have been largely absent from the control groups circles. There was very little evidence that learners in the control groups made any significant progress towards *"empowerment"* either at an individual or group level. In most cases the control group programmes focussed almost exclusively on literacy and numeracy construed in the narrowest sense. Despite aiming to promote wider change, the primer based programmes rarely achieved this. There was little evidence of discussion having taken place and where changes were observed they were not organically linked to the literacy process (but rather had origins in separate local development initiatives).

The failure of a primer-based approach to empower people is echoed in the review of the government's literacy project in Uganda (October 1995), which observed a number of weaknesses:

- *"There is no creative and active involvement of learners."*
- *"The problem-solving approach recommended in the curriculum is not reflected in the primer. Answers are given, not worked out by learners themselves."*
- *"Topics and messages do not address the wider and more complex needs of learners eg analysis of sources of credit, agricultural price patterns, gender roles in society."*
- *"Approach is unlikely to mobilise communities which are disorganised, under severe economic pressure etc."*
- *"The time for discussion is short; leaving no structured opportunities for peer learning."*

This contrast between the outcomes of the REFLECT circles and the control groups warrants further exploration. It is worth revisiting the great claims made for literacy in the opening paragraph of the Introduction - which are later called into question or dismissed as myths. Does literacy help develop logical abilities, increase political awareness, strengthen organisations, solve problems, increase productivity, reduce infant mortality, limit population growth and democratise countries? The evidence from this first two years of research would suggest that the outcomes of adult literacy are not inherent but rather depend on what happens within the learning process. Literacy is not, in itself, empowering but the literacy process can be interwoven with an empowering process such that the two can mutually reinforce each other.

4.7 Methodological learning

The REFLECT Mother Manual which is being published alongside this research report attempts to pull together the best practice from the three pilot programmes. It is therefore inappropriate to try to do that same process within a short section of this report. There are however, one or two points which it is worth highlighting here and these emerge particularly from where weaknesses in the methodology have been revealed.

In El Salvador we have seen that, like all methodologies, the REFLECT methodology can be distorted. The worst case of this was the teacher in COMUS who prepared the maps and matrices at home so that the literacy class would learn quicker! Within any practice of PRA, the process should be seen as more important than the product. With REFLECT, where the process is entirely internal to the community, an emphasis on product is even less appropriate.

Another key learning point in El Salvador was the need for adequately educated facilitators. Facilitators with just three grades of primary education behind them struggled with the process. This does not mean that high academic achievers are required. However, some basic literacy level (perhaps equivalent to sixth grade primary education) might be necessary for the facilitators to be able to use the approach effectively. This should not normally be an obstacle (most literacy programmes are able to recruit facilitators at this level, even if they are volunteers) and should probably never be an absolute criteria because some facilitators with third grade education may be more skilled than some with sixth or tenth grade. Basic literacy in the literacy facilitators is particularly needed for them to read the manual, prepare lessons and benefit fully from the training. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to simplify manuals (complex, technical language in the manuals was a problem in both Bangladesh and El Salvador).

One methodological learning point which emerges from all three pilot programmes concerns the use of visual cards. The cards produced by local artists in all three pilots were far too elaborate and detailed - making it hard to use them in practice because the facilitators were not able to copy them simply. The cards should be very simple outline pictures (almost symbols) which can be copied within a few seconds by someone who is not good at drawing. It would even be possible to do away with visual cards and to work purely with a reference list of (equally simple) pictures in the manual. If visual cards are used they must be colour coded and numbered so as to be easily found when needed. This is an area where practice in future projects can significantly improve on the experience of the pilot projects. Further details are available in the Mother Manual.

In reviewing training in the three pilots the universal agreement was that the focus should be put on ongoing training. The initial training period may be between ten or twenty days, with a strong focus on field practice of PRA - and discussion by trainees of how the resulting maps and matrices can be used for introducing literacy and numeracy. The facilitators manual is itself a means of ongoing support. However, regular contact between facilitators is essential (in groups of between ten and thirty - depending on the scale) - where they can review their experiences over previous weeks and prepare for the coming weeks. These meetings may be fortnightly at first and then monthly once they become more established. This appears to be good practice in any literacy programme - but is not always followed. The facilitators should be given as much control as possible over the agenda of the ongoing training so that they can mould it to their needs (indeed it is possible for this ongoing training to function without external facilitation as was the case in Uganda).

In relation to the scope of the manuals, one common criticism of the three pilot programmes (in retrospect) would be that they sought to cover too many Units. The result was that they went into too much detail on certain themes (eg agriculture) and did not even cover some other themes (eg health) within the initial time frame. This occurred partly because initially it had been assumed that each Unit would be covered more quickly. Whilst some cumulative depth of analysis is clearly desirable it might be better to "mix and match" a little more - so that everyone covers a range of core themes and then goes back and addresses each theme in more detail.

One additional criticism of all three manuals is that they were originally designed having key words for all Units, even late on in the course. In practice this was often overlooked and facilitators developed more creative reading and writing based on graphics produced by learners after the initial Units. But in other classes, facilitators followed the manuals religiously and were still picking out key words and even breaking them into syllables long after the learners had acquired basic literacy skills. This is clearly problematic. There is a case for key words and syllabic breakdown in the first few Units,

but once the basic concept (that words are made up of syllables) is clear the emphasis must be on whole words and (progressively) phrases. In all three pilots key words were also pre-chosen whereas in projects now starting up the REFLECT approach some are leaving the choice of words entirely to learners in each centre (with the facilitator keeping a note on syllables covered).

It is only through field practice that observations like the above can be made. The methodology which is now emerging and which is consolidated in the REFLECT Mother Manual has learnt both from the mistakes and successes of the pilots and should in future lead to projects which are more effective than the original three pilots.

4.8 Cost effectiveness

4.8.1 BANGLADESH

An analysis of cost effectiveness has to consider not only the literacy and numeracy outcomes but also the broader outcomes of the programme on people's quality of life. It has not been realistic for ACTIONAID, in such a short time, to undertake detailed cost benefit analysis which incorporates all these wider impacts on development. The section on empowerment is a guide to the kind of changes which might take place in the long term and which would have to be woven into a statistical cost benefit analysis.

In the context of Bangladesh, we have seen some impact in the economic sphere (particularly in relation to improved planning and better use of loans), in the health sphere (an increase in awareness and practical knowledge as well as concrete actions eg latrines / tube well) and in relation to children's education (indications of more regular attendance and more support at home). Women's status has generally been improved. This impact is not just the result of the *"product"* of the literacy circles but the result of the *"process"* (participation and active discussion of local issues within the REFLECT Centres).

All the above factors need to be considered when looking at the cost of the REFLECT programme in relation to other approaches to adult literacy. If the REFLECT process produces benefits which other literacy programmes cannot then we should not simply compare cost with cost.

Costs per year for one REFLECT centre with 15 learners (in Taka)

7,800	Facilitator's honorarium
1,200	Facilitator's training allowance
350	Facilitator's bag/umbrella
375	Facilitator's Manual and visual cards
50	Facilitator's notebook
250	Large manila sheets (50)
640	Marker pens (20)
375	Learner's notebooks
500	Blackboard and chalk
160	Pens and pencils
100	Erasers and sharpeners
11,800	= 786 taka per learner
	= approx £12 ($18) per learner.

The Unit cost of the Bhola REFLECT programme per learner can thus be said to be 786 taka (approx £12) over a year.

To put this in context, a 1992 study by CAMPE (M.H. Rahman and S.D. Khan, quoted in NFE Project Final Report, CEC/ADB 1994) estimated that costs per learner of 530 taka were normal. This estimate appears however to have been for just a six month period (the REFLECT costs for six months would be 486 taka per learner) and it is not clear whether it includes facilitators honorarium or training. Given these factors and inflation since 1992, the cost of 786 taka appears very reasonable.

It should be noted that the costs of the Bhola programme are by no means indicative of costs which all REFLECT programmes involve. The payment of facilitators is by far the largest component of the costs and this is not something automatically required by the REFLECT method. The pilot REFLECT programme in El Salvador worked with volunteer facilitators and in the next phase of REFLECT in Bangladesh at least one of the projects will work with volunteers.

Another factor to be considered is the economy of scale. The costs of producing the manual and visual cards would be much reduced if done for a larger programme and bulk purchase of other items would also reduce costs.

It should be noted that the costs calculated above are based on 15 learners per centre. The size of the circles in Bhola was based on the pre-existing shomitis (of 15 women). In future Shomitis will be larger (minimum 30 members) so this will change. In Uganda the REFLECT circles tend to have 25 or 30 learners so this should present no problem. Large circles would significantly reduce the cost per learner (eg if there were 25 learners per centre the average cost would be 472 taka or £7.50 per learner).

The average cost of the existing Bhola programme of £12 per learner per year becomes a particularly good investment when one considers the effectiveness of the REFLECT method. Compared to the World Bank estimate that on average only 25% of learners successfully complete adult literacy courses about 60% of learners successfully completed the REFLECT programme. The evaluators also suggest that there is a high likelihood that they will retain their skills (which the World Bank estimates only happens to 50% of successful learners).

There is no doubt that if the goal of a literacy programme is just to teach learners to sign their names then REFLECT is not the cheapest option. But if the goal is sustained literacy and an impact on wider development then REFLECT is a low cost approach.

Finally, it is worth making a brief comparison to children's education. The Unit cost of primary schooling in Bangladesh is $10 about a year - but with a five year cycle ($50) and only a 24% success rate (ie about $200 per successful learner). Whilst primary schooling has many other functions than teaching literacy, the same can also be said for the REFLECT process which, in comparison, comes very cheap.

4.8.2 UGANDA

The costs involved in the REFLECT programme are itemised below, considering both direct and indirect costs.

£2,960 =	Salary of Literacy Coordinator
£7,314 =	Facilitators allowances
£1,866 =	Field Workers salaries for training/monitoring
£1,014 =	Training Costs (materials / food etc)
£604 =	65 manuals (£4,651 preparing/printing 500 manuals)
£772 =	Designing and Printing Visual cards
£87 =	Photocopying
£1,071 =	blackboards
£171 =	Chalk/Pencils
£1,833 =	manila paper (100 reams)
£220 =	thick marker pens
£333 =	facilitator's notebooks
£1,100 =	Learners' exercise books.
£44 =	tape / drawing pins
£80 =	termite killer
£19,469 =	TOTAL (for one year)

Analysing the above we might regard the first three items as indirect costs or overheads (salaries and allowances for facilitators - which are optional in that other programmes have used volunteers) and the rest of the items as direct costs for the functioning of the literacy circles. Thus:

£ 7,329	Direct costs
£ 12,140	Indirect costs

If we look at this per centre (there were 65 centres) then we see that the costs were:

£122.75 direct costs per centre
£186.76 indirect costs per centre

£309.51 total costs per centre

If this is then looked at per learner (an average of 27 learners enrolled in each centre) then we see:

£4.54 direct costs per learner
£6.92 indirect costs per learner

£11.46 total costs per learner

Finally we can look at the cost per successful learner (a 69% success rate: on average in each centre 19 learners graduated as literate):

£6.46 direct costs per successful learner
£9.82 indirect costs per successful learner

£16.28 total costs per successful learner

However, enrolled learners who did not graduate did sometimes leave having learnt basic literacy. If we assume that this is the case for 50% then the average direct cost per successful learner is £5.50 (and total costs per successful learner are £13.87). To put this in context the recent review of the government's pilot literacy programme in Uganda (*"A Process Review of Functional Literacy Project in Uganda"* October 1995) noted:

"At the time of Process Review the average estimated expenditure for 15,741 enrolled learners is $67.2. The figure is expected to rise to over $70 [about £47] by the end of the nine months when learners are expected to become literate."

One of the main costs in the Ugandan government programme has been on preparing, translating and printing primers. Based on these costs, the REFLECT approach is definitely a low cost approach (about one quarter of the cost per learner).

4.8.3 EL SALVADOR

The following costs were involved in the literacy programme in COMUS:

£640	Printing visual cards
£300	Preparing and printing manual
£330	manila paper / card (1,700 sheets)
£200	thick pens
£2,060	training of facilitators
£200	exercise books
£133	pens/pencils
£150	facilitators notebooks
£800	other equipment:furniture / lamps
£2,450	Education coordinator (50%)
£2,366	Education Promoter

£9,629

£3,816	= direct costs
£5,813	= overheads

If we look at this per centre (there were 14 centres) then we see that the costs were:

£272.57	direct costs per centre
£415.21	indirect costs per centre
£687.78	**total costs per centre**

If this is then looked at per learner (an average of 20 learners enrolled in each centre) then we see:

£13.60	direct costs per learner
£20.76	indirect costs per learner
£34.36	**total costs per learner**

Finally we can look at the cost per successful learner (a 65% success rate in circles where the method was applied)

£20.92	direct costs per successful learner
£31.93	indirect costs per successful learner
£52.85	**total costs per successful learner**

This is a relatively high cost compared to the other two pilot programmes and reflects the small scale of the programme in a country where the costs of living are high. Whilst Bangladesh was also a small scale programme the salary and printing costs were low. It is rather ironic that the one country where volunteer facilitators were used turns out to be the most expensive of the three pilot programmes. There would be a massive reduction in costs if the programme was to function on a larger scale.

CASE STUDY: LAS CONCHAS - EL SALVADOR

Las Conchas is high up in the hills in an area which, up until the late 1970s was a huge coffee plantation. During the civil war it was abandoned owing to conflict. The coffee became overgrown as did the buildings of the old hacienda. In 1991 a group of landless families from elsewhere in Usulutan came to the area in a desperate search for land. In the past some of them has worked on harvests for the past landowner in the area, receiving a pittance. They cut down some of the coffee and started planting maize and beans for subsistence.

In 1992 these families formalised themselves into a cooperative and started to clear the brambles which had over-run the hacienda. With the peace accords and agrarian reform, by 1993 they were able to gain legal recognition and titles to 200 manzanas of the land. Part of this has been divided up between the 35 families in the cooperative, giving each 2 manzanas, with the rest being left as coffee to be worked collectively. Much of the coffee is still overgrown and un-productive.

There are many serious problems still faced by the community, perhaps most notably, soil erosion (on the slopes) and the shortage of water. They have to walk long distances (up to an hour) to collect water.

The literacy circle opened in early 1994 and rapidly became a focus for many discussions of local issues. Through construction of a natural resource map they were able to have an active and focussed discussion of the water problem. They organised to seek and obtain funds from Asay, a national NGO. The literacy circle then acted as a focus for planning daily work groups of 4 people for 3 months to build four large water tanks. They are now awaiting the rains to fill the tanks. They are also planning to rehabilitate an abandoned well, concreting the walls and cleaning it out.

The household map produced a focused discussion on access to the community which led to mobilisation to repair the main access road. The agricultural map produced discussions around the theme of soil erosion. The circle recognised the problems associated with cutting down coffee on slopes to plant maize and beans - gulleys have started to appear and the soil is being lost. As a result coffee is no longer being cut down in the hilly areas and strategies to save the soil through bands and the planting of strips of pineapple across the slopes have begun. Organic fertiliser and the planting of tomatoes are other actions that have emerged from the circle.

As a product of the literacy circle, many of the learners are now more active in community organisations, even taking up formal positions of responsibility. One learner is now treasurer for the cooperative, one is president of the credit committee, one is coordinator of the women's group, one is active in the education committee and one is active in a new committee on soil conservation. These are all new positions taken up in the past year, since the start of the literacy programme, and represents a dramatic democratisation of the community.

Land tenancy Map produced in Las Conchas showing individual landholdings, plantations, cooperatives and land in dispute. The analysis of land ownership turned out to be of practical value.

Many problems still remain. There is no school in the area for the 20 children of school age and there is little prospect of the Ministry of Education providing one in the near future for so few people. The nearest school is over an hour's walk away. In this context, teaching the adults to read and write is vital to enable them to pass on skills to their children.

REFLECT facilitator from Las Conchas, surveys the land which is now owned legally by the cooperative.

5. Concluding Reflections

5.1 In the three pilot programmes the REFLECT approach proved to be both more effective at teaching people to read and write and more effective at linking literacy to wider development.

5.2 Of those adults who initially enrolled in REFLECT circles 65% in El Salvador, 60% in Bangladesh and 68% in Uganda, achieved basic literacy over a one year period. This compared to 43%, 26% and 22% in the respective control groups [and a typical 25% according to Abadzi (1994)]. REFLECT was particularly effective with women (and in Bangladesh specifically with younger women in the 15-19 age group). Participants in REFLECT circles remained well motivated and dropped out in much lower numbers than those in the control groups. There were positive signs that the participants are developing literate habits but it is too early to evaluate fully the extent to which literacy skills have been permanently consolidated.

5.3 In respect of empowerment the three evaluations identified the following major outcomes:

- Participants in all three pilots spoke of self realisation as one of the major benefits of the REFLECT circles. Most spoke of better self esteem and the increased ability to analyse and solve problems as well as articulate ideas. Furthering their knowledge of the local environment (agriculture, health, income generation and survival skills) helped this process of self realisation, which was also reflected by improved relations within the community (and within the household).

- Increased participation in community organisations was a concrete outcome of the REFLECT circles in Uganda and El Salvador. Most strikingly, 61% of learners in El Salvador reported that they had now assumed formal positions of responsibility in community organisations which they did not hold before the REFLECT literacy programme (eg chair, secretary or treasurer on the Community Council, Cooperative Directorate, Credit Committee, PTA, health committee, women's group or church group).

- The discussions in the literacy classes often led to community level actions to improve local conditions. These actions ranged from the economic sphere (constructing grain-stores, diversifying crops, cooperative buying or selling) to community projects (small infrastructure such as re-grading access roads, school repairs, water pipes); from the environmental sphere (terracing, organic fertilisers, tree nurseries, tree planting) to the health sphere (digging a tubewell, building latrines, clearing rubbish, cleaning stagnant water). The key factor in achieving the implementation of these actions was felt to be that the learners had independently arrived at decisions to do something through their own analysis - they felt a local ownership of the problems and of the possible solutions.

- The evaluations also revealed that the REFLECT circles had a positive influence on people's resource management at an individual or household level. Women in Bangladesh repeatedly spoke of the value of calendars and matrices to strengthen their analytical skills, enabling them to plan better, develop more effective coping strategies (eg bulk buying and storing goods) and have more control over decisions regarding loan use (which was previously dominated by men). In Uganda there were what appeared to be the beginnings of significant attitudinal changes seen in relation to child spacing, polygamy and traditional cultural practices which can undermine food security.

- The REFLECT pilots appeared to have had a positive initial impact on gender roles and relations in Uganda and Bangladesh. In Uganda learners and facilitators reported that many men have taken on domestic work, such as carrying water and fetching fuel wood, previously carried out by women. Women are now more vocal and more involved in key household and community decisions. In Bangladesh women attributed their growing involvement in household decision making to the REFLECT circle. However, in El Salvador, where the organisations and individuals involved in the pilot lacked basic gender awareness, there was no significant impact on gender roles, revealing that much depends on how the methodology is interpreted and applied.

- The evaluations revealed that the REFLECT circles had a positive impact on health awareness, typified by the comment of one woman from Bangladesh: *"We learnt something of health before but it was not very practical and felt like a lot of rules. With making maps it was a lot more helpful and we understand things a lot better."* This was translated into concrete actions in many communities, particularly involving latrine building and more effective disposal of waste.

■ In respect of children's education the most dramatic results were seen in Uganda. Government schools fed by REFLECT parents have experienced a 22% increase in enrolment; and parents in over one-third of the REFLECT classes have started their own NFE centre for primary age children. A more modest increase in school attendance was registered in the other pilots.

5.4 The REFLECT approach proved to be low cost and cost effective in Bangladesh (£12 per learner) and Uganda (£11 per learner), in both cases cheaper than an equivalent primer-based programme. In El Salvador, the only pilot programme to use volunteer teachers, the costs were surprisingly higher (£34 per learner) owing to the small scale of the programme in a country where costs are high. In a REFLECT programme resources are shifted from printing to training, which makes the REFLECT approach generally cheaper than a primer-based approach at a time of high printing costs.

5.5 A process of methodological learning has taken place through the pilot programmes so that the REFLECT approach is now stronger. Certain core recommendations are made. For example: facilitators should normally have at least 6th grade primary education in order to teach other adults; visual cards should be made much more simple than in the pilots; a broad range of approaches to reading and writing integrated with the graphics should be stressed (avoiding the use of key words throughout) and training for facilitators should be ongoing. Most of these observations are relevant to making any adult literacy programme effective. The essence of the REFLECT method has been compiled into a REFLECT Mother Manual available from ACTIONAID.

5.6 Literacy does not empower people. The control groups showed very few signs of having changed peoples lives. It seems that many of the past claims about the benefits of literacy are bogus. Literacy in itself probably does not empower and does not bring benefits in respect of health, productivity or population growth.

However, this is not to say that literacy can never bring huge benefits. This research has shown that the REFLECT methodology has brought quite dramatic benefits in the three pilot projects. This appears to be because the REFLECT approach involves two parallel and interweaving processes: a literacy process and an empowering process. The literacy gives people practical skills which will help in the empowerment process (eg as they assume positions of responsibility in community organisations) and the empowerment process in turn creates uses for literacy in people's everyday lives. This mutual consolidation and reinforcement is the essence of why it makes sense to fuse the two processes. Literacy programmes, then, can be very empowering if the literacy process is interwoven with other processes through a well structured participatory methodology.

Literacy programmes in the past (especially since Freire) have tried to fuse the two processes and some have succeeded, with remarkable results. However, most have failed because they have fallen into believing that either literacy in itself is sufficient (so they have ignored other processes and focused on the product) or they have assumed that empowerment in itself is enough (but have in practice tried to *"indoctrinate"* people into new ideologies). REFLECT holds these two processes in an effective balance and helps them to build on each other.

5.7 There are many unanswered questions that remain. How flexible will the REFLECT approach prove to be? Will it work in urban areas, with refugees, with adolescents, within a government programme? Will it work on a large scale or will the participatory essence be lost? Will people who have learnt in the original pilots retain their skills in the longer term? Three things are needed:

■ ongoing evaluation of the original pilot programmes and of new REFLECT experiences;

■ a capacity to train others and promote best practice so that methodological learning is continuous.

■ the continual experimentation and scaling up of the approach in different contexts.

ACTIONAID is planning to address all three of these in the coming three years.

6. A dialogue on REFLECT with critics

Rather than write a conventional set of conclusions we felt it might be better to anticipate some of the questions that arise from this report (and which have arisen when we have shared REFLECT with people in various international workshops) and to offer some initial responses to them. The answers do not aim to be comprehensive as space will not permit this. However, they give some indication of how responses might be framed. The questions that have arisen include:

- Aren't there many other participatory approaches to adult literacy? Is there really anything new about REFLECT?
- Doesn't REFLECT require highly trained experts?
- There have been many examples of successful literacy campaigns - the history of literacy is not a catalogue of disasters - look at Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam, etc.
- Can REFLECT be adapted to different settings? ■ urban areas
  ■ adolescents / children's education.
- Is it feasible to apply REFLECT on a large scale / at a national level?
- Does REFLECT add anything to current theoretical debates on literacy? Is it an autonomous or ideological approach?
- REFLECT seems to involve initial intervention with literacy but isn't it better to link literacy to other projects so literacy come second not first?
- Could REFLECT survive outside the umbrella of an international NGO?
- Won't the REFLECT approach suffer the same distortions as have occurred with so many other good innovations?
- Isn't primary education a bigger priority when resources are scarce?
- Can REFLECT (or any other literacy programme) assist people to challenge the power structures which cause poverty?
- Can you really make claims about REFLECT based just on three pilot programmes?
- What do Freire and Chambers think of all this?
- What happens next?
- What are the areas for further research?

There is nothing so new about REFLECT. Aren't there many other innovative and participatory approaches to adult literacy?

There are indeed many other participatory approaches to literacy which have been developed as small scale pilots or experiments over the years. Most have depended on highly innovative and creative individuals who have motivated and inspired others. Most people involved in such projects will readily acknowledge that promoting such participatory approaches is extremely hard work and requires highly skilled workers who are flexible (and can work in a largely unstructured environment) and ready to adapt to changing demands.

In general participatory approaches and methodologies are seen to be in contrast or opposition to structured, vertical or pre-packaged approaches.This is rightly so in most cases. However, the lack of structure in most participatory methodologies makes them highly dependent on individual leadership or creativity - which in turn makes them extremely hard to replicate in areas where such individuals cannot be found.

What REFLECT appears to offer is a structured participatory approach. The manuals produced in each project provide a very clearly defined set of steps. There is a sequence of 20 or 30 Units and within each Unit clear steps on how to elaborate the map or matrix and how to use it for literacy and numeracy work. This is not the same as structuring or pre-packaging the content, rather it is a structure to the process. In REFLECT training we have said we want the facilitators to dominate the process or the method - but not the content.

Once this structure has been provided it is possible for learners or facilitators to break out of it at their own pace - so that some circles will re-sequence the Units, others may spend more time on numeracy than literacy, others may decide to ignore certain Units and go on to others. Groups of local facilitators can work on developing new Units or adapting Units that are in the manual. However the initial manual is sufficiently structured to be something that can be used by facilitators who are not highly trained exceptional individuals - but rather are the type of person available in most communities.
There are many things to be learnt from other

participatory methodologies. The REFLECT Mother Manual has tried to draw on some of these and weave them into the wider REFLECT approach. For example, the use of local songs, proverbs and traditional dance as a starting point for literacy (cf LABE in Uganda) offers some exciting possibilities - effectively using people's own existing cultural codes as an entry point into literacy. The use of *"real materials"* from the local environment (brought in by the learners) is another approach. Role plays or drama can also be introduced and there are hundreds of *"games"* (or *"dinamicas"* in Latin America) for warming up which can be used within literacy circles.

All of these other approaches are compatible with REFLECT. It is not a competition. We are seeking to bring together best practice in participatory approaches and to provide these with a core structure around the construction of graphics (and the basic belief in learner generated materials). REFLECT is still incomplete. It is still evolving and will go in different directions in different contexts. It is not pre-packaged. It is not a matter of adopting it but adapting it.

Doesn't REFLECT require highly trained experts to be successful?

The literacy facilitators in each of the three pilots were local people and had the same profile as the facilitators in the control groups. Their education level on average ranged from 6th grade primary (in El Salvador) to fourth grade secondary (in Bangladesh). This is the typical education range of facilitators in most primer-based programmes. Facilitators with less initial education (eg those with just three years of primary education in El Salvador) did have difficulty with REFLECT but would almost certainly struggle with any method (their problems were largely related to their own difficulties in reading and writing).

The facilitators in the three pilots received two weeks initial training at the most. They do not therefore qualify as *"highly trained experts"*. There was a strong emphasis placed on ongoing training through exchange workshops with other facilitators but this should be regarded as good practice in any literacy programme. No amount of initial training is a substitute for ongoing training once facilitators have field experience.

There have been many examples of successful literacy campaigns - the history of literacy is not a catalogue of disasters - look at Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam etc.

There is no doubt that there have been successful literacy campaigns but these are the exception rather than the rule and where they have worked has tended to be at very specific historical moments - particularly after a revolution. When other processes of radical social change are taking place then literacy can become of interest and practical use to many people. In such a context the acquisition of literacy can be rapid if there is a massive national mobilisation (eg in Nicaragua where secondary schools were suspended for the five months of the Literacy Crusade). In these cases, any literacy methodology might work, because it is the political context that is decisive.

Most countries do not have many such *"historical moments"* where suddenly literacy can become the focus of high profile mobilisation linked to wider social change touching everyone's lives. Should we wait for such moments or should we perhaps try to create such moments on a local scale? Moments where people, at the village level see a real opportunity to change their lives and where, in the process of learning, people organise and engage in actions which will contribute to change? If we wish to create such *"moments"*, a primer-based methodology seems inadequate, whereas the REFLECT approach offers some positive hope.

Can REFLECT be adapted to different settings:

Urban areas

The feasibility of adapting REFLECT to urban areas was addressed in a workshop in Uganda with some fascinating and detailed results. It is a particular challenge because of the origin of many of the techniques in Participatory Rural Appraisal. However, many Units can be designed either for work in neighbourhood-based urban programmes or in employment based / sectoral-based programmes (eg with prostitutes / street traders etc).

Neighbourhood programmes can be designed in many cases with maps of households, human resource maps, mobility maps (identifying sources of employment and location of services), seasonal migration maps, historical maps, health and hygiene maps, land-ownership and tenancy maps,

income and expenditure trees, credit matrices, preference ranking of employment, calendars of price changes, calendars of work-availability (perhaps over 5 years), neighbourhood timelines, gender workloads, venn diagrams of government and non-governmental agencies or of informal power structures in the neighbourhood, matrices analysing different types of crime or vice, calendars of cultural celebrations etc.

The list of possible Units for a REFLECT programme in urban areas could go on and on. However, there is a need to develop these Units in practice in new pilot programmes to see how they really work and identify problems which may be specific to working with REFLECT in urban areas. The REFLECT Mother Manual has a section on adapting REFLECT to urban areas.

Adolescents / children's education.
Much work has been done by ACTIONAID Nepal on adapting Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques for work with children (see *"Listening to Smaller Voices"* 1994). This establishes a strong foundation for adapting REFLECT to work with children. A curriculum based on REFLECT for work with children is being developed in Uganda and looks very promising. It is hoped to consolidate this into a *"Daughter Manual"* at some point in the future. The REFLECT Mother Manual has a section devoted to adapting the method to work with children.

Is it feasible to apply REFLECT on a large scale / national level?

Yes it should be feasible because although it is a very participatory approach it is also a highly structured approach. It would be necessary to develop either a series of manuals adapted to different parts of a country or a modular manual which had certain core Units and then a series of choices which could be made by local teams. Decentralisation in the administration of national literacy programmes is already widely acknowledged as important (see Iredale 1994, Uganda Review 1995) and this would be very consistent with such an approach. Moreover, national programmes such as that in India are emphasising inter-agency cooperation at the local level and that is certainly very compatible with REFLECT. However, until REFLECT is taken up on a larger scale some of the potential problems (and advantages) will not be fully known.

Nilufer Rahman, Director of INFEP (government of Bangladesh) and Habibur Rahman of CAMPE (NGO education network) did not anticipate a problem: *"REFLECT will receive massive attention. With the pilot having been successful REFLECT will work as a paradigm not only in Bangladesh but in the whole Asia-Pacific region... The REFLECT programme will receive support as an effective instrument of mass literacy."*

Does REFLECT add anything to current theoretical debates on literacy? Is REFLECT an autonomous / ideological approach?

REFLECT could be regarded as a methodology for the ideological approach in various respects:

- as all materials are learner generated there is more scope for participants to define the functions of literacy than if they are reading pre-packaged materials. A literate environment created from below (eg with village level silk screen printing) might reinforce this.

- REFLECT does not claim magical powers for literacy and indeed suggests that literacy in itself is nothing - but rather emphasises the wider processes involved. Literacy is not seen as the thing which leads to logical analytical thinking (Goody 1986) or as the only real knowledge. Rather the process of learning can be transformative. Some of the visualisation techniques involved with REFLECT may be of practical value for systematising and analysing knowledge within a group but this is quite different from suggesting that literacy itself transforms people.

REFLECT seems to involve an initial intervention with literacy but is it not better to link literacy to other projects (eg income generation)? Literacy should come second not first.

This is a false debate. There are development processes constantly happening in any community and so literacy (if learners are motivated to join) will always be related (in their lives) to other processes. Those who argue for *"literacy comes second"* seem to assume that only western inspired external interventions in a community are a development process on which literacy can then be inserted. This is an outsiders view and can be condescending. The key is for the literacy programme to respond to local conditions and the

local reality. The methodology is thus essential.

As long as people are not coerced and the literacy programme does not try to pre-define the uses of literacy then the first/second debate is redundant. Besides, a broad motivation to learn is a stronger foundation in many respects than something linked to one activity. There are risks in trying to link literacy programmes to other externally induced development programmes eg income generation - as people need very little literacy for any specific activity and so there is very limited scope. Literacy needs to be looked at more generally - as something which can have an impact in various areas of someone's life. People's motivations are complex and it is naive to assume that they will want to learn only to help them in one particular activity.

Lind and Johnston (1990) identify another core problem:

"The promotion of literacy linked to income-generating projects, among women in particular, is very common today. However, most such projects do not generate income due to underfunding and underqualified staff."

It is possible to use REFLECT in a "literacy comes second" model. The Bangladesh pilot was very much of this model, working with women previously organised into shomitis. It would also be possible to work with pre-existing informal or semi-formal groups within a community (see the work of LABE in Uganda with cultural groups). The debate should be focussed on how literacy is introduced and conceived rather than on whether it comes first or second.

Could REFLECT survive outside the umbrella of an international NGO?

Yes. No special support was given to these three REFLECT pilots. Initial training was of short duration. The conditions were the same as in the control groups (which were also under the umbrella) where the results were very different. As a low cost approach (see cost effectiveness section) REFLECT should be feasible in a government programme (one is presently planned within the government's NFE programme in Bangladesh) and with local grassroots organisations (eg COMUS in Salvador where ACTIONAID's input was very minimal).

Won't the REFLECT approach suffer from the same distortions as have occurred to so many other good innovations?

Any methodology can be distorted and we have seen some examples of how this might happen in the pilot programmes (particularly in El Salvador). This needs to be guarded against. The REFLECT Mother Manual which has been prepared will be one means of communicating the essential elements of the method, but if there is no will to engage in a participatory process and empower people then the methodology will be distorted in one way or another (and probably in ways which we cannot anticipate).

What REFLECT offers is an effective approach for those who are committed to the fundamental principles behind it: for example that poor communities have knowledge and that development programmes which aim to empower them must be built on that knowledge.

Isn't primary education a bigger priority when resources are scarce?

Investing only in primary education at a time of widespread adult literacy is problematic. Parents are the ones who have to decide whether to send children to school (and often have to pay for their children's education) so they cannot be ignored. Literate adults are a key to a literate environment at home and in the wider community and can be a good guarantor of the quality and accountability of primary schools (through PTAs and school management committees). Investment in adult literacy programmes may therefore enhance the effectiveness of children's education (see section on Children's Education in Uganda). The debate should not be posed in terms of *"either/or"*. An integrated or *"inter-generational"* approach should be pursued - so that adult literacy and children's education are mutually reinforcing.

Can REFLECT (or any other literacy programme) assist people to challenge the power structures which cause poverty or does it just help to alleviate the worst effects?

No methodology is the answer to everything. Much depends on context. REFLECT could be used as a means to mildly improve the lot of the poor or to challenge overall power structures. It all depends

on who is using the method and in what context. Alone it is never going to be enough to change power structures but is could act as a catalyst for people taking control of their lives and the agenda of local development. This is a strong foundation for radical change. However, a REFLECT programme may lead to frustration in some places if it is not backed up.

The evaluators in Bangladesh noted:
"The REFLECT method is not appropriate for learners at all socio-economic levels since this approach is basically designed for the disadvantaged people of society. Social consciousness created through this programme may not be acceptable to influential people . The situation could be combated through creating peoples organisations."
(Nilufer Rahman, INFEP; Habibur Rahman, CAMPE)

Can you really make large claims about REFLECT based just on three pilot programmes?

The pilots were in very diverse settings so something larger can be intimated. This is enough to warrant wider scale experimentation with REFLECT but it is certainly the case that close monitoring and evaluation of future projects is required to see whether the REFLECT approach does adapt well to different settings.

What do Freire and Chambers think of all this?

The REFLECT approach has been welcomed by both Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers.
Freire commented: *"This is exactly what I sought to do - but you give it more structure and stronger roots. The literacy process will be based on people's own experience, their language and their reality - so that the transition from reading the world to reading the word will be more organic and clearer. This is very exciting work."* He later added: *"Please feel free to use my name in the title of the new approach to literacy"*

Robert Chambers commented: *"I have read your manual with fascination and excitement. My own experiences with adult literacy programmes have been uniformly negative, and at last here is an approach which looks credible in terms of maintaining interest and commitment."*

What Happens Next?

The three pilot programmes were always conceived as starting points rather than end points. It was assumed that if they were effective they would be a source of learning and could influence other literacy programmes both in their countries and internationally. This has been the case. Other literacy practitioners came to hear of the REFLECT pilots through Education Action magazine, field visits and various journals, seminars and conferences. In November 1994, it became clear that a seminar that was designed as an internal workshop between the three pilot programmes would have to be opened up and 80 participants came from eight countries. By July 1995, when a final exchange seminar was planned the event in Uganda attracted 130 participants from 19 countries. Many of these people are now planning their own REFLECT programmes.

Interest has been shown in REFLECT by most major players in adult literacy, including the International Council of Adult Education (and sister organisations ASPBAE, AALAE and CEAAL), UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank.

The World Bank Review of Education *"Priorities and Strategies for Education"* which was published in August 1995 focuses on children's education but acknowledges that the six key reforms identified *"will not however, contribute significantly to solving the problem of adult illiteracy today, in a world with more than 900 million illiterates. Programs of adult education are necessary, but such programmes have a poor track record. One study showed an effectiveness rate of just 13 percent for adult literacy campaigns conducted over the past thirty years (Abadzi 1994), and there has been little research into the benefits and costs of literacy programmes.*

"Several new approaches to adult literacy appear promising however, in large part because they address motivation - the key factor in all successful programmes.

"In the REFLECT program, being developed with the help of the NGO ACTIONAID in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda, poor communities are encouraged to construct maps, calendars, matrices and diagrams based on their local circumstances and are helped to analyse and systematise their knowledge. The alphabet and literacy then become a more elaborate way of representing this local knowledge and literacy is linked much more tightly

to other aspects of development in the local area. These new approaches will be reviewed in detail in a future World Bank paper."

There are now plans to develop Regional REFLECT Training Centres in at least six countries (in Bangladesh, Uganda, and perhaps in El Salvador, Ghana, Burundi, India, the Yemen, Peru). These centres will offer training to other NGOs and government literacy programmes in their own country and in neighbouring countries.

The scaling up process is most advanced in Bangladesh (with ODA funding), involving a training centre on Bhola Island offering extended training courses to NGOs and government personnel committed to replicating REFLECT. In the capital, Dhaka, a REFLECT Coordination Unit will identify suitable partners and provide funding and support to selected organisations for the replication of REFLECT. Shorter training courses (and issue based / refresher courses) will be run. The exchange of experiences will be promoted through a regular newsletter as well as through workshops, evaluations and field visits. Specific research will be undertaken to determine the effectiveness of REFLECT in new contexts (eg in urban areas, within the government programme, with volunteers, with fishing communities etc) and this will be widely disseminated.

Other countries where REFLECT initiatives are underway or planned include: Ghana, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Sudan, The Lebanon, Egypt, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru and Ecuador. An International REFLECT Unit is being established within ACTIONAID in the UK. This will ensure a continual flow of documentation and experiences between countries and continents; undertake cross-country research programmes; provide an international training resource; publish materials on REFLECT and liaise with other agencies.

What are the areas for further research?

There are several areas for further research on REFLECT. These can broadly be divided into two areas: continued longitudinal research of the initial pilot projects and research relating to new projects taking up REFLECT in different contexts.

Longitudinal studies of impact

The time frame of the action research project presented here was short (two years). There is a need to continue close monitoring and evaluation of these pilot projects to determine the longer term impact.

Such studies would consider the extent to which the literacy and numeracy skills of REFLECT participants have been retained or consolidated. If the skills are retained, how are they being used? What functions have been defined locally for literacy?

Longitudinal research would also consider the extent to which the empowerment of participants identified in this report is sustained. The initial impact of the REFLECT circles on community participation, local action or gender roles may decline for a number of reasons (eg backlash, resistance, frustration, exhaustion). It may, on the other hand be maintained. Determining which conditions or factors are conducive to sustaining change will be important.

Related to the above work would be a study of alternative strategies for the post-literacy phase. What approaches to creating a more literate environment have been most effective? Which strategies are most consistent with using the REFLECT approach at the initial phase? To what extent can the same methods be incorporated into a post-literacy course?

REFLECT in New Contexts

REFLECT is now being taken up in many different countries by many different organisations (see *"What Happens Next?"*). This opens up new areas for research. Establishing a strong international network of REFLECT practitioners will facilitate ongoing research on the relevance and effectiveness of REFLECT in new contexts.

Areas which offer immediate possibilities for research include:

- To what extent can REFLECT adapt to urban areas, having emerged from the use of Participatory **Rural** Appraisal techniques? Does the lack of close-knit community and shared experience in many urban contexts limit the value of the approach?

- Can REFLECT work with children / adolescents (within formal schools / non-formal education centres)? If so, how does it need to be adapted? Which elements work most effectively?

- Will the REFLECT approach be feasible within a government literacy programme (even on a pilot basis) where the structures involved may allow for less flexibility?

- Can REFLECT work on a large scale (either in a government or NGO programme)? Will facilitators' manuals end up with such generalised Units as to reduce participation and lose essential relevance to the participants lives (in the same way as has happened to primers?).

- Can REFLECT work effectively in the North (eg in the UK)? If so, in what contexts and how does it need to be adjusted?

- What adjustments to the REFLECT approach would be needed if working in an ideographic language like Chinese (where characters represent the meaning rather than the sound of words)?

- Can REFLECT be adapted to a wide range of different communities, such as pastoralists, fishing communities or refugees?

In each of these cases specific research projects could be framed which compare REFLECT to control groups using existing literacy methods/ materials to determine which approach proves more effective (and more cost-effective). It is likely that some work on all the above will be undertaken over the next three years.

As REFLECT is taken up in different settings the process of scaling up itself could become an area for research. Which approaches to replicating REFLECT prove successful and which do not? Is a Mother Manual sufficient for people to produce their own materials or are intensive training programmes essential? Is it better to scale up through NGOs, through governmental programmes, through the private sector or through a combination of these?

How can we find out more about REFLECT?

The main source of practical information on REFLECT is the *"REFLECT Mother Manual"* (published by ACTIONAID UK, March 1996). This manual aims to enable literacy planners to produce their own REFLECT manuals adapted to their own local conditions in different countries. It is practical, easy to use and available free of charge to organisations in the South (£10/$20 for organisations in the North) whilst stocks last.

Ongoing information about the development of REFLECT internationally can be obtained from:

David Archer or Sara Cottingham at:
ACTIONAID, Hamlyn House, MacDonald Road, Archway, London N19 5PG.
Tel: 0171 281 4101 Fax 0171 263 7599
E-mail: davida@actionaid.org.uk
or sarac@actionaid.org.uk

Information about the training centres in Uganda and Bangladesh can be found out from:

ACTIONAID Uganda c/o Anthony Wasswa / James Kanyesigye, PO Box 676, Kampala, Uganda Tel / Fax: 256 41 267738

ACTIONAID Bangladesh c/o Ton van Zutphen / Mukul Rahman, House 9/4, Street 2, Shyamoli, Dhaka 1207 Tel: 880 2 811763
Fax: 880 2 813150

Further information on REFLECT is also available from the national ACTIONAID offices or partners in Burundi, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru and Sierra Leone. Telephone or fax numbers and addresses can be obtained via AAUK.

Other materials that are available include:

Uganda Workshop report - August 1995

Country by Country evaluations - 1995

Bangladesh Workshop report - Nov 1994 (also in Spanish)

Original REFLECT manuals from the three pilot projects (1993/4)

Briefing Notes

Using PRA for Adult Literacy - article in PLA Notes (June 1995)

Various conference papers and presentations

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Acronyms

AA - ACTIONAID

AAB - ACTIONAID BANGLADESH

AAES - AYUDA EN ACCION (ACTIONAID) EL SALVADOR

AALAE - AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION

AAU - ACTIONAID UGANDA

AAUK - ACTIONAID UNITED KINGDOM

ARENA - NATIONAL REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION (EL SALVADOR PARTY)

ASPBAE - ASIA AND SOUTH PACIFIC BUREAU OF ADULT EDUCATION

CAMPE - CAMPAIGN FOR MASS POPULAR EDUCATION (BANGLADESH)

CEAAL - CONESEJO DE EDUCACION DE ADULTOS DE AMERICA LATINA

CIAZO - CORPORACION INTER-GREMIAL DE ALFABETIZACION DE LA ZONA ORIENTE

COMUS - COMUNIDADES UNIDAS DE USULUTAN

FIVDB - FRIENDS IN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT BANGLADESH

FMLN - FRENTE FARABUNDI MARTI DE LIBERACION NACIONAL

ICAE - INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADULT EDUCATION

IG - INCOME GENERATION

INFEP - NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME (GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH)

LABE - LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION (UGANDAN NGO)

NFE - NON FORMAL EDUCATION

NGO - NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

NRM - NATIONAL RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (UGANDA)

ODA - OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (UK)

PDC - PARTIDO DEMOCRATO CRISTANO

PRA - PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL

PTA - PARENT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

RC1 RC2 - RESISTANCE COUNCIL (LEVEL 1 = VILLAGE / 2 = PARISH ETC); ELECTED LOCAL AUTHORITY IN UGANDA

REFLECT - REGENERATED FREIREAN LITERACY THROUGH EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TECHNIQUES

SHOMITI - SAVINGS AND CREDIT GROUP. BANGLADESH

UNESCO - UNITED NATIONAL EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURAL ORGANISATION

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE